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ABSTRACT

Effective systems of integrated, sequential, and systematic programming strategies at the state and local level are required to meet the needs of at-risk youth. The following six papers included in this compilation describe effective programs and practices that can be implemented in the local community, at the school district level, and in the public policy arena: (1) "Mobilizing Resources Within the Schools to Serve Children At-Risk" (E. T. Joyner) emphasizes changing the personal interactions and social climate of a school; (2) "Mobilizing Local Coalitions and Collaborations to Better Serve Children At-Risk" (O. Heleen and F. T. Miller) emphasizes a community-based approach to working with at-risk children and their families; (3) "Mobilizing Parents to Better Serve Children At-Risk" (M. J. Willis) emphasizes the importance of parent involvement; (4) "Mobilizing Academic Resources to Better Serve Children At-Risk" (G. A. Smith) emphasizes school strategies to overcome student alienation and disengagement; (5) "Mobilizing the Public to Serve Children At-Risk" (B. L. White) emphasizes the public relations needed to support school improvement programs; and (6) "Mobilizing State Level Systems to Serve Children At-Risk" (R. H DeLone and J. Rodenstein) emphasizes the leadership role of state governments. Five charts are included and most papers also include lists of references. (FMW)

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Resources to Better Serve Children At Risk

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This series of papers, *Mobilizing Resources to Better Serve Children At-Risk*, was supported by a grant from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The following papers are included in the series:

Mobilizing Resources Within the Schools to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Edward T. Joyner

Mobilizing Local Coalitions and Collaborations to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Owen Heleen and Frederick T. Miller

Mobilizing Parents to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Mary Jackson Willis

Mobilizing Academic Resources to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Gregory A. Smith

Mobilizing the Public to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Barbara L. White

Mobilizing State Level Systems to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Richard H. DeLone
Summarized by Judith Rodenstein

Mobilizing Resources to Better Serve Children At-Risk

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent

Compiled by
Judith Rodenstein
Bureau for Pupil Services

Victor J. Contrucci
Assistant Superintendent
Division for Handicapped Children and Pupil Services

William J. Erpenbach
Director
Bureau for Pupil Services

This publication is available from:

Bureau of Pupil Services
William J. Erpenbach
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster Street
P.O. Box 7841
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MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AT-RISK

Executive Summary

Keeping children in school through graduation is one of the most effective deterrents to a life of poverty. National research continues to affirm that school success is the single most important qualification in assuring one's future career opportunities, economic independence, and well-being. Unfortunately, many elementary and secondary school students experience circumstances which jeopardize and place "at-risk" their school progress and eventual high school graduation. Many of these at-risk children become school dropouts.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is expanding its commitment to and programming for children at-risk. As a part of this effort, a series of papers was commissioned by the department for the purpose of providing Wisconsin citizens with information on the effective mobilization of state and local resources to better meet the needs of our youth. The papers were prepared in conjunction with a special project undertaken by the department to promote school and community collaboration in more effective programming to meet the needs of at-risk children.

The six papers in the series are:

Mobilizing Resources Within the Schools to Serve Children At-Risk
Edward Thomas Joyner
Yale Child Study Center
New Haven, Connecticut

Mobilizing Local Coalitions and Collaborations to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Owen Heleen, Institute for Responsive Education
Boston, Massachusetts
Frederick T. Miller, Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

Mobilizing Parents to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Mary Jackson Willis
Governor's Office
State of South Carolina

Mobilizing Academic Resources to Better Serve Children At-Risk
Gregory A. Smith
National Center on Effective Secondary Schools
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Mobilizing the Public To Serve Children At-Risk
Barbara L. White
Jackson Public Schools
Jackson, Mississippi

Mobilizing State Level Systems to Serve Children At-Risk
Richard H. DeLone, Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia
Summarized by Judith Rodenstein, Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

The authors discuss ways to mobilize existing resources to better educate and care for our disadvantaged and marginal students. The six authors all stress the need for an understanding of and a commitment to the troubled youth both in our schools and in the larger community. They also review successful programs and practices. Among their conclusions are the following:

- Teaching and learning are not mechanical processes. The human interrelationships involved in this transaction must be considered. Students perform at optimal levels when the quality of their relationships with adults in the school is based on nurturance and caring. According to Joyner, the emphasis in the schools should be on changing the personal interactions and social climate of a school. Joyner discusses the School Development Program (SDP) which creates the opportunity for parents, teachers, building level staff and central office staff to address the problems associated with improved learning and personal development for disadvantaged and marginal students.

- In his paper, "Mobilizing Academic Resources," Smith states that failure for many of our at-risk youth is not linked to low ability but to alienation and educational disengagement. The curricular goals of our schools should be to re-engage our youth in the process of learning. Smith believes that students want to learn for five reasons: a need for competence, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic interests, the experience of ownership, and social support. Eliciting student involvement in the act of learning is dependent upon addressing these needs. Yet, few contemporary educational settings accomplish this with any consistency. Special intervention programs such as the Media Academy in California and Experienced Based Career Education in Wisconsin are described.

- Barbara White discusses an additional component essential to programs for children at-risk. An effective plan of *public mobilization*, must be designed to generate community support and participation. How aware is the public of the at-risk problem? Do citizens feel that the problem should be a public education concern? These programs need community support, and White describes a public relations campaign that can be planned to develop that important support.

- Heleen and Miller also believe that strategies for working with at-risk children and their families will be most effective if a community-centered approach is utilized. They believe that citizens need to take a stand, provide strong leadership, and make a commitment to a common community vision. They describe several programs which inspire, energize and reward members of the community as they grapple with the at-risk issue.

Many of the issues discussed in these papers can be implemented in the local community, at the school district level, and in the public policy arena. In the DeLone/Rodenstein paper, the case is argued that state governments can and must take the lead in solving the problems of children at-risk. The report defines the problem, summarizes the research on effective state-level responses, and makes the case that the at-risk problem cannot be solved without strong initiatives by state governments. The focus should be on developing effective youth-serving *systems* that make integrated service options available and permit continuous programming of sufficient duration to affect individual development.

In conclusion, it is clear that offering fragmented and disjointed services is ineffective and will never serve to meet the needs of children at-risk. In Wisconsin, we must develop effective systems of integrated, sequential, and systematic programming strategies at the state and local level. Many of the pieces are in place. We need to step back and re-examine our vision and mobilize the many resources that we have in Wisconsin so that we can effectively move towards success with our children at-risk.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES WITHIN THE SCHOOLS TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

Edward Thomas Joyner
Yale Child Study Center
New Haven, Connecticut

Introduction

For several decades, we have grappled with the problem of how best to educate disadvantaged and marginal students. Cole S. Brembeck has described this effort as "a relatively unexplored frontier in education, probably as monumental an undertaking as the establishment of free schools along the wide American geographic frontier 100 or more years ago."

Statistics indicate that attempts to educate disadvantaged and at-risk students have met with little success. This problem becomes more disturbing when it is realized that substantial numbers of at-risk students will populate our public school systems in coming decades. Harold Hodgkinson (1986) has forecasted that these students will be the majority in many schools, particularly in urban systems. His revelations suggest that they will be poor and come from single parent homes.

It should be noted that not all such students suffer from the at-risk condition. However, even in situations where their social and economic status is equivalent to middle class peers, these students do not achieve relative to their potential. As such, they join the ranks of marginal or alienated students.

Marginal or alienated students do not receive the full benefit of the education system because they are disconnected from it in a way that negatively impacts on their learning potential and overall growth and development. They do not represent any one race or ethnic group. They may be middle class and live in rural or urban areas.

The price that society pays for its inability to educate these groups within our student population is great in human and economic terms. Acquiring literacy and a well-rounded education along with the development of interpersonal competence is far more valuable to the individual and society today than at any other time in our nation's history. Modern technology and the Information Age have clearly ushered in an era that requires optimum development as the key to the achievement of a decent standard of living and a personal sense of self-worth. Such development aids in guaranteeing the quality of life that we value as American citizens. True to tradition, we look to school reform to address many of these concerns.

Working With Students At-Risk: New Directions

Recent efforts at educational reform have placed tremendous emphasis on higher academic standards for students. Many reformists believe that an increase in educational rigor and tougher standards of discipline are sufficient to address current educational problems. In the view of some of these individuals, learning is a mechanical process that can be legislated and discipline is something that can be imposed on students rather than an internal dynamic that can be modeled, taught and learned.

We know that teaching and learning are not mechanical processes and that the human interrelationships involved must be considered. Current research has demonstrated significant correlations between student achievement and the extent to which their psychosocial needs are met within the school. The literature supports the notion that students perform at optimal levels when the quality of student-adult relationships in the school is based on nurturance and caring. High quality education requires collaboration and cooperation between all of the stakeholders in the educational enterprise.

All students will benefit from a school where nurturance and caring become paramount in the minds of teachers, parents and administrators. For students at-risk such a school can be a major factor in maximizing their intellectual growth and overall potential. Our goal then is to reorganize the school to accomplish the following:

(1) Provide a means of bringing parents, educators, and support staff together on a regular basis to plan and coordinate activities that educate and develop children;

(2) Utilize mental health professionals, faculty, administrators and other appropriate staff to improve the ecology of the school while also focusing on individual students who are experiencing difficulties;

(3) Stress the need to solve school problems using "no fault" principles that focus on solutions rather than placing blame;

(4) Develop processes to monitor, evaluate, and revise strategies and implementations for systemwide improvement, and;

(5) Create opportunities for parents and educators to periodically reflect on their working relationships with a view toward valuing differences of opinion, managing conflict constructively, and reaching consensus on how to address issues rather than majority/minority conflict.

The positions taken in this paper are based on the work of Dr. James Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale University Child Study Center and Associate Dean of the Yale School of Medicine. Comer and his staff have been successful in using his School Development Program (SDP) to improve the achievement and general development of disadvantaged youth in New Haven, Connecticut; Benton Harbor, Michigan; Prince George's County, Maryland; Norfolk, Virginia; and Lee County, Arkansas. **In this model, knowledge of the behavioral and social sciences is applied to every aspect of a school's program. The focus is on parent, teacher, and student strengths rather than on weaknesses or deficits.** The emphasis is on changing the interactions (ecology) and/or climate of a school or social system from difficult to desirable and, in turn, facilitating the growth and development of parents, school staff, and students. Thus, Comer's definition of what constitutes school effectiveness deviates from that of many educators such as the late Ronald Edmonds, who relied primarily on norm-referenced test scores as the means of assessing school effectiveness (Edmonds, 1982).

Comer defines an effective school as follows:

> Effective schools seek to promote the overall development of individuals. They enhance social, psychological, and moral development among students so that they can interact positively with others within and outside of their respective social networks and communities. They build within youngsters a strong desire to excel; to rise above personal circumstances and to improve themselves and the people and things around them for the good of all. And in the process, students gain the levels of basic skill mastery which allows them to meet all of the expectations of our society in an effective and responsible way as students, and eventually as adult heads of families, members of communities, and citizens. (Comer, 1980)

This definition recognizes that adequate overall development in the school context makes school learning and desirable social behavior possible; that these achievements, in turn, make successful life performance possible.

I submit that school improvement for students must be done in a democratic, participative, and team-oriented way; in short, it must be a collaborative effort. Collaboration becomes especially important with at-risk and/or marginal students. Such students and their families have usually not developed productive working relationships with schools, are distrustful, and have difficulty communicating with school officials. Yet, collaborative working arrangements between schools and such families hold great promise for improving student performance in the classroom and aiding their psychosocial development. Studies by Marrow, Bowers, and Seashore (1970); Spector (1986); Nielson (1975); Bragg and Andrews (1973); and Beckhard and Lake (1971) report that collaborative management of business organizations increases productivity, decreases absenteeism and job turn-over, increases job satisfaction, and results in a more positive regard for the company by employees.

Brown (1987) found that school based collaboration resulted in high quality decision-making, greater flexibility, accountability and efficiency. Teacher satisfaction was moderately positive, and parents and students experienced higher levels of satisfaction. Additional benefits of collaborative management include more trust and openness in interpersonal relationships (Bartunek and Keys, 1982). Such trust is important when working with populations that have not traditionally had such relationships with schools. It allows the stakeholders to direct energy otherwise wasted in conflict toward more effective service delivery to children.

According to Hord (1986), there are other specific rewards associated with collaborative work that include:

1. the creation of a product or service that neither of the collaborators could produce alone;

2. the release of a responsibility that neither collaborator could carry independently;

3. the public may gain greater benefit from the joint effort than each separate party could have offered;

4. the product or service of the joint endeavor can sometimes lead to permanent relationships, opening the way for further sharing and mutual benefit;

5. each collaborator can experience an expansion of possibilities without having to become too thinly spread, and;

6. although more time, energy and resources may have been expended, very often, the same time, energy and resources are ultimately conserved by shared effort. Duplication of services is sometimes eliminated while improving the quality of services.

In spite of the studies and practical wisdom suggesting that collaboration and broad-based participation would improve the quality of schooling, we have been slow to respond. Roland Barth (1984) has acknowledged that social relations of teachers and principals are often characterized by poor communication and isolation in our work in schools across the nation we have found adversarial relationships within groups of teachers, between teachers and administrators, between administration and central office, and between school and home. Yet we know that the support and input of all of the key players—parents, teachers, administrators, central office staff, and other child advocacy agencies—is necessary to optimize student academic and psychosocial development.

Comer's SDP model creates the opportunity for parents, teachers, building level staff, and central office staff to address the challenges associated with improved learning and personal development for disadvantaged and marginal students. The inclusion of all relevant parties in this process is critical to both long- and short-term success.

A school district wishing to adopt the SDP model should agree to carry out nine developmental steps that lead to the integration of the SDP program into its system. They are:

Step 1. School board and superintendent orientation and commitment;

Step 2. Selection of a change agent to oversee the administration and monitoring of the program;

Step 3. Orientation of other key staff such as central office administrators, target school principals, and teachers;

Step 4. Orientation of building level staff and parents;

Step 5. The establishment of a district level steering committee;

Step 6. The establishment of a governance and management body in each target school;

Step 7. The establishment of a support staff including a psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, and counselor to deal with mental health and relationship issues and to better coordinate the work of mental health professionals with parents, community agencies, and faculty;

Step 8. The establishment of a parent participation program, and,

Step 9. The establishment of a review and modification process.

These steps can be modified to respond to local needs and conditions.

The structure, functions, and operations of the program are broad, as are the guiding principles. This characteristic of the model reflects the realization that the school is the basic unit of change, and that each system and each school building must have enough operating room within the model's structure to respond to its own unique needs. A description of the basic structure of the program and its guiding principles follows.

The School Development Program

The School Development Program is monitored by a steering committee that meets monthly. It is composed of appropriate central office staff and representatives. This committee is headed by the superintendent. It provides support and direction for schools in the SDP network. Central office staff work hand in hand with school based officials to assist the school's efforts in the key areas of planning, prioritizing, monitoring and evaluation.

The SDP model is used to plan and manage all activities within the school in a way that promotes desirable staff and parent interaction and, in turn, desirable student learning and behavior. The SDP model is a systems level primary prevention approach that addresses all aspects of a school's operation, not a particular group of individuals, or any particular pre-targeted aspect of a school. It is a process model that allows the school to review its goals and methods and to identify problems and opportunities in a "no-fault" atmosphere. It seeks to develop creative ways of dealing with problems, and to implement these ways using the collective good judgment of school officials and parents. The program is carried out through regularly scheduled meetings of its three components, the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), The Mental Health Team (MHT) and the Parent Program.

School Planning and Management Team

The key program component in the program is the building level representative governance and management body commonly referred to as the "School Planning and Management Team." This group is led by the principal, and it includes an MHT member and representatives selected by teachers and parents. It should meet at least twice a month. Members should distribute minutes of the meeting to their constituents. In order to encourage broad participation, various subcommittees should be formed to work on projects and to deal with issues that affect the overall functioning of the school. The SPMT should:

- Establish policy guidelines for all aspects of the school program;
- Respond directly to problems and/or opportunities, or delegate this responsibility to other groups or individuals who will report back;

- Carry out systematic school planning related to social climate, academics, staff development, and public relations;
- Promote effective resource utilization, coordination, and program implementation;
- Work closely with parents to plan an annual school calendar which integrates social, academic, and staff development functions; and,
- Monitor program activities.

A Comprehensive School Plan should be developed by the SPMT. It provides year-long direction and focus to the school in its effort to fulfill its mission. It is monitored and adjusted through SPMT meetings. It is aligned with the school district's strategic plan and places specific emphasis on academic and social development, school climate, public relations, and staff development. The governance and management group must be *representative* of the teachers, administrators, aides, and parents within the school community.

The Mental Health Team

The Mental Health Team is made up of the school social worker, psychologist, special education teacher, counselor, and other appropriate building level support staff. This group is also led by the principal. It works in a diagnostic/prescriptive and preventive fashion. It provides ongoing consultation to teachers and to the governance and management body in matters that pertain to child development. It meets on a weekly basis to:

- Apply child development and relationship knowledge and skills to the social climate, academic, and staff development programs developed by the SPMT;
- Consult with classroom teachers to assist them in responding to students in a way which promotes growth and development;
- Assist classroom teachers in developing strategies that prevent minor problems from becoming major ones;
- Set up individualized programs for children with special needs. This may involve the utilization of services outside of the schools when necessary and possible;
- Make recommendations for building level policy changes designed to prevent problems;

- Assist all staff members in bridging the gap between special education and regular classroom activities;

- Provide consultation and training workshops to staff and parents on child development human relations, and other mental health issues; and

- Facilitate the many interactions between parents and school staff.

The Parent Program

The SDP views the Parent Program as the cornerstone for success in developing a school environment that stimulates the total development of its students. Parents are expected to:

- Select representatives from their group to serve on the governance and management team;
- Participate in activities initiated by the parent-teacher general membership group and SPMT;
- Review the school plan developed by the SPMT; and,
- Support the efforts of the school to assist students in their overall development.

Staff Development

The Office of Staff Development works with individual schools to develop inservice workshops and seminars that address training needs identified in conjunction with the Comprehensive School Plan or other school wide improvement projects that are initiated by the SPMT. Input from teachers, administrators, and support staff is solicited in developing training programs.

Guiding Principles

In order to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society, all children must experience a high level of personal development. We must efficiently and effectively use our collective energies and resources to prepare them to enter into the adult world as confident and competent individuals. Hence, schools must endeavor to build working relationships that encourage youth to take on the challenges that impede their development. By creating a desirable climate or ethos, schools provide models of appropriate human behavior that children can identify with, imitate, and internalize so that they can grow and fully develop academically and socially.

Such conditions cannot be created overnight. They must be generated and nurtured through a program that involves staff development and student and parental interaction. The SPMT, MHT, and Parent Program provide the structure or framework through which the process takes place.

The principal is a key figure in that he or she guides or directs this endeavor and models the appropriate behavior. Teachers, parents, and support staff serve on the respective teams, and assume responsibility for the behaviors that create in the school a climate that is characterized by collaboration, trust, problem solving, and the recognition of all persons important in the education of children. Our assumption is that virtually any human problem can be solved if people are willing to explore and develop solutions and interventions and expend the energy necessary to implement and monitor them. Hard work, along with a passionate belief in human growth and potential, must characterize SDP schools. No short, sweet, easy approach will work.

Curriculum

The curriculum should provide for activities, experiences, and content supportive of students from families under (social) stress and available to them outside of school hours. It should be stimulating and should have personal meaning and utility for students. It should provide students with opportunities to acquire and refine basic skills, to think independently, and to engage in simulated and real world activities that aid their psycho-social development.

Relationships

The quality of the relationships between adults within the school community directly influences the social development of students. Healthy relationships between adults provide models for students to identify with, imitate, and internalize. Hence, it is important for educators and parents to work together to identify and solve problems that could adversely impact the overall school climate and student development.

Planning and Coordination

The planning and introduction of new programs should be facilitated through the governance and management group. Planning should be conducted from a systems perspective. Any program development or modification should first be evaluated on the basis of its impact on the total system or school community. Schools must do short- and long-range planning, with input from parents and educators. With good planning and coordination program duplication, fragmentation, wasted energy and resources can be avoided. It is essential that a sense of direction and purpose be created.

Problem Solving

Problems are solved in a no-fault atmosphere with collaborative input from appropriate staff and parents. There is a specific structure used to engage in problem solving by the respective teams within the schools. During meetings, participants make a conscious attempt to focus on problem solving rather than placing blame. Within the SDP model, problems are seen as opportunities to tap the creativity and resourcefulness of the group rather than as crises.

Decision Making

Means are not always justified by the end. Process is as important as product. Decisions should be reached by consensus rather than in the "tyranny of the majority." There need be no winners or losers. New ideas should be tried, assessed, and changed if it is felt that changes are necessary. Collaborative decision-making creates a shared sense of ownership in school activities and outcomes; thus a wider commitment among staff and parents to "make things work."

Implementation Process

The implementation stage of the program begins with orientation and overview sessions with the principal and later with the general faculty. After these sessions, the principal and faculty work together to:

Establish a process for selecting representation for the SPMT;

Prepare a year long schedule of SPMT meetings;

Collaborate with SPMT members to set standard operating procedures for the team, e.g., agenda setting, distribution of minutes, problem solving procedures, length of meetings;

Facilitate the development of the Comprehensive School Plan by the SPMT and a procedure for monitoring it;

Establish the MHT and a time when the team can meet weekly to review student cases; to discuss intra-school programs and procedures that affect teacher and student performance and well-being; and to generally develop programs and activities that contribute to positive school climate and promote student success.

Grade level meetings, curriculum work groups, fund raising committees, and the like, should report to the SPMT. The work of the SPMT and MHT should serve as a model for all committees or work groups established within the school. All groups should be conscious of "no-fault" and collaborative problem solving. As the SPMT, MHT and subcommittees use these strategies in their work, they become *integrated* into the day to day operations of the school and eventually *institutionalized*. The guiding principles become second nature to staff and are seen as the "natural" and "right way" to conduct school affairs. They manifest themselves in the classroom, the guidance office, the playground, the cafeteria, and under the best of circumstances in the home and community.

Discussion

The School Development Program is designed to coordinate and integrate all of the activities involved in developing and educating students within a school. It offers a common ground for parents, educators, and child service providers to work together on behalf of children. This will improve communication, provide a sense of direction, and a shared sense of purpose, ownership, and responsibility for the outcomes of the programs in the school. It should promote mutual respect among parents, teachers, and administrators. It should permit systematic identification of problems and opportunities within the school and thoughtful, focused solutions to them. The "bottom line" is that a sense of community and an ethos supportive of achievement is created among the adults in the system. This is experienced by the students and, in turn, improves their social and academic performance.

This is not a painless process. The coordinated effort might temporarily increase organization, management, and personnel problems. Initial phases of the model's introduction will be uncomfortable, but the model does permit orderly and cooperative attention to these problems. It permits them to be solved rather than to "fester." The resources and expertise to execute the School Development Program are commonly found in school districts throughout the United States. The program may, however, require that personnel be deployed in a way that allows appropriate mental health professionals to be scheduled in buildings during a time that will allow them to work with staff on the learning climate and other programmatic issues affecting students at-risk. Additionally, a school district should appoint a change agent to monitor the program in schools throughout the district. The change agent should be expected to receive training in the initiation and implementation of the model.

The critical resource is the focused energy of parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff cooperating in the development on behalf of children or a comprehensive school plan under the auspices of a governance and management group (SPMT). This requires that time be made available both during and after school to accomplish the goals of the program. Time for meetings, staff development, long- and short-term planning is an essential ingredient and a most precious resource.

In order to develop support for this effort, it is essential to create public awareness of the need to investigate new approaches in meeting the needs of students at-risk. Representatives from schools should visit districts that are using the model. Articles written about SDP should be distributed to all appropriate parties. Parents should be involved as early as possible. Skeptics and sympathizers should take part in site visits and receive printed material about the program. Allowing critics and supporters to talk to users of the program will permit them to correct any misconceptions and preconceived notions as well as to develop realistic expectations.

Evaluation

Since the program provides an opportunity for parents and school officials to conceive, develop, and execute programs within the school to address student problems, it generates its own momentum. The effort is sustained through regularly scheduled meetings in which all of the stakeholders in the education and development of the child have a voice. This team can, through a customized Comprehensive School Plan, develop specific goals and outcomes that are measurable. At various points during the school year an assessment can be made to measure growth and chart progress. Any school issue may be addressed using this process. The team thus serves as a filter through which all programs are introduced to the school. It can accept or reject any innovation or proposal with the knowledge that such decisions involve all of the appropriate constituents of the school. This process eliminates, or at least limits, win/lose behavior provided that decisions are reached by consensus. Win/lose behavior clearly creates an atmosphere in which adults are attacking each other rather than the problems of the school and child.

School-Home Collaboration

Fantini (1975) speaks of the need for all citizens to cooperate in confronting the institutional limitations of the bureaucracy which manages the schooling process in modern American communities. Lightfoot (1978) argues that parents and teachers must begin to understand, trust, and cooperate with each other to a much greater extent in order to avoid conflicts, jealousies, and scapegoating.

A pragmatic reason for such collaboration is that it simply helps schools to teach and students to learn (Herman and Yeh, 1983; Thomas, 1980; Fehrmann, et.al., 1987). As outlined by Kagan (1984), research has begun to demonstrate that there are several positive effects of school-home collaboration: 1) improved student cognitive performance, 2) improved student behavior and attitudes toward school, 3) improved school climate, and 4) improved school-community relations. Henderson (1981, 1987) documents several dozen major studies or programs which support the belief that there is a direct and positive correlation between a parent's participation and the educational success of his or her children.

The most far-reaching discussion of the importance of the home-school partnership in education is offered by Comer (1980). While acknowledging that home-school partnerships are important in all communities, he presents a specific explanation of the importance of such partnerships in low income and minority communities:

> The need for parent participation is greatest in low income and minority communities or wherever parents feel a sense of exclusion, low self-esteem and/or hopelessness. Parents are the first and most important models and teachers of their children. If parents feel excluded, of little value and hopeless, they will be likely to transmit these attitudes to their children. (p. 126)

He goes on to demonstrate that such attitudes and the student behaviors often associated with them can be extremely counterproductive when it comes to accomplishing school tasks and meeting school goals.

Conclusion

The School Development Program is based on an understanding that learning, whether at home or at school, should not and cannot be separated from the overall development of the child. Cognitive development cannot be separated from the affective, social or psychological development of children at any age. Comer's philosophical foundation for school-home partnership points out the vital importance of teacher-parent cooperation and of consistency in values, expectations, and interactions with children. Whenever the home and school cultures and behavior patterns are, as Lightfoot terms them, "worlds apart," children cannot be expected to bridge the gaps and overcome the confusion. The predictable consequence in such situations is that children usually embrace the familiar home culture and reject the unfamiliar school culture, including its academic components and goals.

It is clear that neither parents nor schools will reach their goal of educating children without each other. For at-risk populations such a partnership probably make the difference between success or failure for the child. Any movement to address the needs of at-risk children must include activities and structures created within the school to eliminate the gap between home and school. Schools and parents planning together on behalf of children are essential.

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About the Author

Edward Thomas Joyner is a consultant with the Carnegie Project to Improve Middle Schools under the auspices of the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, Connecticutt. His most recent paper, "Promoting School Success Through Collaboration and Coordination," was presented at the American Psychological Association Convention in Atlanta. He is completing his dissertation, "The Comer Model: Impact Assessment of the School Development Program," at Yale, and is collaborating on a forthcoming book, *School Climate Enhancement: Analytical Perspectives*, to be published by Columbia University Press.

MOBILIZING LOCAL COALITIONS AND COLLABORATIONS TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

Owen Heleen
Institute for Responsive Education
Boston, Massachusetts

and

Frederick T. Miller
Lincoln Filene Center
Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

Introduction

In early America, each village or town contained a community school where children could learn and citizens could meet. Often this one building served as a school, church, court and social hall. This building became the shared focus of a community's identity. It became more than a physical place. It became a symbol of the interpersonal, caring links among individuals. It was emotionally and physically the *center of the community*. Here, individual problems became the community's concern whether citizens gathered for religious purposes, educational endeavors, social occasions, to witness a court case, or to debate issues at a "town meeting." As the community's center, it provided everyone with a source of power, i.e., individual citizens found they could rely on the shared power of the collective community in times of need. This support gave a citizen a greater sense of individual power. At the same time, however, social behaviors tended to become more constrained and focused on social goals which had been, to some extent, negotiated by the whole.

This phenomenon resulted in successful communities that were far more homogeneous than is the case today. In early America, communities tended to be composed of individuals with similar values and beliefs. When serious differences arose that could not be resolved by the collective, one of the parties would strike out in a new direction and establish a new community. For example, when Roger Williams had differences with the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, he was invited to leave. He established Rhode Island and led his followers, the new community, according to his values and beliefs.

Today, it is nearly impossible to strike out physically in a new direction and establish a new community. But what has happened in America over the years is somewhat analogous. Economic and cultural differences have led, or forced, some groups into new "territories" away from the mainstream, to establish new communities or subgroups within a larger community. Often what drives people out is explicit exclusion from "mainstream" American culture or a perception of "marginality." For example, after being denied full participation in American civic life for more than three hundred years, Black Americans have built a rich culture. Many elements of this culture are very different from "mainstream" American culture. Another example of this phenomenon has resulted from society's inability to provide positive role models for low-income youth. In reaction to the perception of marginality and the feeling of being an outsider, youth from low-income backgrounds have created a "youth culture" very different from that of their parents. Indeed, in America today it may be pointless to try to define a "mainstream" culture.

In addition to this increase in cultural diversity, America has seen a bureaucratization of its social life. Communities today are larger and their problems have become more complex. Communities, if the term is to have any meaning, are not cities and towns, but may instead consist of a group of goals, ethnic traditions, and life styles. Much of our social behavior has become formalized with the growth of public and private social services agencies and their rules and regulations. In many communities, however, those of us who are educators find that it is difficult to keep track of the number of agencies developing or implementing regulations that impact on children.

On a very basic level, however, social norms and expectations are rather standard. Children progress through the various levels of the school system without always understanding that elementary schools and high schools are different institutions with different leadership and different goals. They perceive that school programs and programs in the community are integrated. From this perspective, they see no differences among community institutions. They presume that local institutions work together. Little League games take place on the school playground so Little League must somehow be related to the school.

In many ways, our community institutions are inter-connected. Harold Hodgkinson, in his demographic study of education titled *All One System*, pointed out that a change at one level of the system will soon impact an another.

Our social world is an ecosystem. Urie Bronfenbrenner (*The Ecology of Human Development*, 1979) has been especially influential in promoting an ecological perspective on human development which can be used to better understand how children develop in a complex social world. Seen from this perspective, children are a part of and influenced by many institutions. These include but are not limited to family, racial and ethnic communities, religious organizations, school, health and social service agencies, parents' workplaces, employers, the city and state in which they live.

Each of these agencies and institutions is in turn connected to the others. What happens in one part of the social system affects many or all parts of the system. This concept needs to be emphasized as we attempt to strengthen through collaborative efforts the ability of these institutions to better serve youth.

In summary, it can be argued that today's social institutions are both disconnected and connected. On the *functional* level, they are disconnected. Often, one agency has little contact with another. On the *effective* level, however, the system is very much connected. The effects of an action by an institution such as the school are felt throughout the system. It then becomes critical to use these connections to better improve education of at-risk youth. Each agency or institution has a role to play. If they all become involved in the effort, the effect of the initiative is greatly enhanced.

Applying These Concepts

Strategies to improve the education of "at-risk" children are most likely to work if they reflect an understanding of the ecological perspective and how it impacts on a child's life. This is commonly referred to as a "community-centered" approach. The focus must be on the individual child *and* his or her diverse developmental needs as the focus for planning, implementation and evaluation. These needs include cognitive development and academic learning (the focus of the school), but cannot be separated from other aspects of development such as mental, emotional, and physical health; social competence; moral or religious values; citizenship; and the ability to earn a living.

One of the key ingredients of school reform, a sense of community, or sharing certain beliefs and values with other institutions is maintained through the adoption of this ecological perspective (working collaboratively) to better serve at-risk youth. David S. Seeley, in his book *Education Through Partnership*, proposes a conception of educational reform in which education is the shared responsibility of families, students, schools, and other elements of the community. In this way, education moves away from the "delegation of responsibility" model in favor of the face-to-face, one-on-one relationships upon which all teaching and learning is based. These concepts are demonstrated in the following examples of successful community collaborations and school reforms aimed at aiding at-risk children.

Example 1

In 1986 and 1987, school districts and church leaders in Oakland and San Diego promoted a community-wide program to make the community aware that parents are the child's first and most important teachers. The challenge was to translate that message into specific actions parents could undertake.

In 1986, with support from the California State Department of Education, Oakland Unified School District sponsored a program called "Education Sunday." On a single Sunday in March, more than 100 school board members, school administrators, and teachers attended church services around the city and were given an opportunity to make a presentation about schools and the ways parents can help their children learn. Parents, grandparents, and others in the congregation were then asked to sign a pledge promising to complete specific actions to help children learn. Although Education Sunday was strictly a voluntary program for everyone involved, the efforts produced almost 25,000 pledges. The following year in San Diego, clergy approached the school district with the Oakland Program concept seeking to replicate Education Sunday in their community. Together, the school district and church groups sponsored three Education Sundays in different sections of the city.

As in Oakland, the program emphasized voluntary participation. The pledges were made available in both English and Spanish and were printed twice on a single sheet of paper. Parents were asked to sign both copies. One was returned to the church and the second copy was kept on a refrigerator, desk or in some other prominent place at home as a reminder.

The San Diego project was broad-based. A Parent Involvement Steering Committee was begun which soon grew to include representatives of the district's central office, the PTA, several ministerial alliances, the Urban League, and the district's Mexican-American Advisory Committee. Building on the heightened awareness of parent involvement, the projects also designed follow-up activities where parent and community volunteers could assist students in a variety of ways. The activities were held in churches, schools and community centers.

Example 2

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has developed a model program for high schools to help pregnant and parenting students stay in school. It is now being piloted in Bay View High School in Milwaukee and Bladensburg High School in Prince George's County, Maryland. The model's key feature is the presence of a counselor/advocate in the school. This counselor/advocate identifies students in need of help and enrolls them in the program. She establishes case-management files for each student and, working through a multi-agency "problem-solving group," coordinates each student's academic progress and health, counseling, employment, and social services.

The role of the counselor/advocate as an individual, not strictly speaking employed by the school, has been important but problematic. Her independence enables her to serve as a personal counselor interested in students' complex situations but unhindered by institutional allegiance. As with many programs of this type, however, her "neither-fish-nor-fowl" status raises a host of questions about the appropriateness of activities, certification, liability, and the like.

In Milwaukee, a subcommittee of the city's pre-existing Critical Health Problem Curriculum Advisory Committee served as a problem-solving group. Mandated membership on this committee includes representatives of the school district central office, the Milwaukee Health Department, the teachers' and administrators' unions, and the Mental Health Planning Council. The Subcommittee on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting was chaired by a representative of Planned Parenthood of Milwaukee and included representatives of many other public and private social service agencies.

In Prince George's County, the problem-solving group was jointly chaired by the Supervisor of Health Services from the public schools and the Director of Child Health Services from the county health department. In the second year of the project, the group merged with the County Executive's Commission for Children and Youth. The group includes representatives from the public schools (guidance, home economics, and health departments), the Department of Social Services, the health department, the county hospital, and juvenile services.

The "problem-solving group" strategy reinforces the "team approach" to serving pregnant and parenting teens. It also provides a vehicle for evaluating the range of services offered by the community.

Example 3

Five children's service organizations and the Boston public schools have joined forces to provide in-school counseling and mental health services in five elementary schools. Working directly with teachers to identify specific children, the consortium provides psychological assessments, evaluations, and individual, group, and family therapy.

Funded with $195,000 by the schools, the United Way, and two foundations, the five agencies worked with 182 children in 1987-1988 through two full-time and five part-time social workers, a part-time psychologist, and five part-time coordinators and support staff.

The most frequently treated problems include acting out behavior, peer adjustment issues, academic performance, shy/withdrawn behavior, family relations, transfer/school adjustment, depression, and delayed development.

The five agencies have successful histories of effective child welfare services by bringing together a unique combination of experience and expertise. Not only do they offer a direct service to individual children within the schools, but they provide an informal source of reference and information for the teachers in those schools.

By connecting the public schools with Boston Children's Service Association, Family Service Association of Greater Boston, New England Home for Little Wanderers, Roxbury Children's Service, and diverse funding, the ownership of the solutions to these problems is broadened to a more fully participating community. Children with these problems and needs come to be seen as "our" (the community's) concern, not just the school's.

Example 4

As a result of a $100,000 grant from the Rice Foundation, and a substantial gift of computers from Apple Computers, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago have opened a state-of-the-art computer lab in its Eisenberg unit. Located in Alba Houses, a deteriorating housing project on the near-west side of the Chicago Loop, the Eisenberg unit is surrounded by conditions which are bleak at best. The public high school dropout rate in Chicago is between 50 and 75 percent.

Passing through the entrance to the Club's computer center, however, is akin to walking through a magic door. Children from an environment of limited opportunities suddenly find themselves in a milieu more characteristic of a high-tech, downtown Chicago office building. It is extraordinarily bright and clean, with custom-designed computer stations, colorful displays, and an exciting ambience practically screaming that the Center is a place to learn and to have fun.

The Rice Computer Center is designed to provide hands-on computer education for the 15,000 members of the inner-city's 13 Boys and Girls Clubs. Children are bused to the Center. At their club units, they may use computer terminals connected to the Rice Center. The Rice Center enjoys the full-time skilled staffing of individuals with Ph.D. and Masters level training as well as practical, inner-city experience; and consultation from nationally recognized experts from the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Immediately across the parking lot from the Eisenberg unit is Chicago's Jacob Riss Elementary School. The school received a $26,000 grant from the state which enables principals to tap resources for community-oriented programs. With these funds, the school is training its teachers to be computer literate. In addition, the school is able to work with the Boys and Girls Club leadership to develop the components of an electronic study hall. Teachers assign work which can be completed in the electronic study hall at the Rice Computer Center. Boys and Girls Club staff, assisted by parents and older children, provide tutoring and assistance to Riss students after school and on Saturdays.

What Is Needed?

From these examples and other similar efforts, we can identify a pattern of necessary elements to guide others seeking to mobilize the community:

1. *Citizens have taken a stand, saying, "We want something different. We will no longer tolerate what we have and we will work to realize these new expectations."* This is diametrically opposed to the "blaming the victim" perspective that underlies many debates on social problems today. Most current social interventions are developed from a "deficit" model that seeks to identify shortcomings in individuals or families and then attempts to remedy those shortcomings.

   Instead of focusing on what's wrong with at-risk children and families, successful programs seem to have adopted Pogo's philosophy: "We have met the enemy and it is us." These programs seek to identify and build on strengths rather than focus on weaknesses.

2. *Leadership has emerged to guide the project and to inspire others.* The leadership may be formal or ad hoc, but someone (an individual or a group) must emerge as the galvanizing leader/friend who can bridge the gaps between disparate groups and find the elements of consensus which will bond people together to address this issue.

3. *There is a common community vision of what should happen.* By establishing this new vision, the community transcends old differences and uses its considerable group energy to realize new goals.

4. *While common goals may be held by all, the people involved in successful projects recognize that the means to achieve their goals will vary considerably.* One way to build on this reality is to encourage individuals and groups to publicly declare what they can do individually and cooperatively. Such pledges of contributions are publicized in the community and routinely reported. Progress toward these pledges must also be measured and evaluated regularly.

5. *Those who have made contributions towards the common goal need to be encouraged and recognized.* Successes need to be publicized so people feel good about what they have done.

   Successful collaborative projects develop specific goals to reduce the impact of at-risk situations. For example, communities commit themselves to realistic goals such as increasing school attendance by 10%, or reducing the dropout rate by 20%.

6. *Leadership builds upon strengths, encourages progress and finds strategies to overcome real or perceived roadblocks, but leadership itself cannot become the focus of the effort.* The project cannot be "owned" by its leader, or other community members won't be interested in participating. As each group does its part, its members "buy in" as owners of community solutions.

7. *Human, rather than institutional, relationships are the building blocks of real progress.* Andrew Hahn's challenging new book, *Dropouts in America: Enough Is Known For Action*, calls for individual advocates for individual at-risk children. David Seeley's *Education Through Partnership* proposes the development of face-to-face accountability as the basis for educational reform. In the early days of America, individuals were not lost in the crowd. People were recognized as individuals and their strengths and limitations, their successes and their foibles were all known. Because collective effort provided a common meeting ground, early communities could address individual needs and help people succeed.

   Collaborations are an effective return to that historical model. Individuals need to look out for others and help the system respond to them.

8. *Successful collaborative projects recognize that we did not arrive at our present situation in the last few days and we certainly won't get out of it tomorrow.* The increase in the numbers of at-risk children has occurred over a long period of time and it will take communities time to implement strategies for overcoming the factors underlying this social problem. Sustained, consistent efforts are essential.

Summary

When these eight elements and conditions are present, a true sense of community emerges; one that inspires, energizes, and rewards members of the community as they resolve community issues. In all cases, this results because leaders take a positive stand. The diversification of the community is recognized and used as a strength, and the approaches are human in approach and scale. "Community" becomes redefined as more than a place, and more than the elements that divide people. It becomes the way in which people live and work together. The result is what outside observers might describe as a "mobilization of coalitions and collaboratives," but what those who live in the community simply describe as "the way we do things in *our* community."

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About the Authors

Owen Heleen is Vice President of the Institute for Responsive Education and Editor of the magazine Equity and Choice. Frederick T. Miller is Director of the Nonprofit Institute, Lincoln Filene Center, Tufts University, and President of a consulting firm, The Chatham Group, Inc.

MOBILIZING PARENTS TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

Mary Jackson Willis
Governor's Office
State of South Carolina

Introduction

In September of 1817, Thomas Jefferson wrote a fellow lawyer about a plan for education. Jefferson's message stressed the advantages of local control of elementary schools. His message was short and indirect. "It is surely better to place each school under the care of those most interested in it's conduct."

Indeed, one of America's founding fathers knew then what we still continue to debate today. Parents (those closest to the children) are our children's first teachers and parents should be provided significant and meaningful opportunities to shape our schools in the best interest of their children.

In too many instances, however, parents have historically been pushed further and further out of the mainstream of educational decision-making. Parents have been reduced to the role of bystanders, fundraisers, and nonessential audience in the highly professionalized and "rule-dominated" business of education in America.

The reasons behind such a scenario are varied and often complex. There are no simple solutions or remedies for the growing lack of parental support of our public schools. Further, the statistics and demographics of just who makes up the modern population of parents quickly reveals an escalating mismatch between a school system that has remained structurally unchanged since the early 1900s and the population and lifestyle that currently describes the families and children of America.

The decade of the eighties will be known as the "Education Reform Years." More than 30 governors named reform commissions. Legislators in almost every state have created major "education reform" laws that pushed America's schools to higher standards and improved outcomes. The corporate sector adopted schools and became a visable force in school reform. Teachers' salaries have been raised at twice the inflation rate while the public was challenged to "support its schools to ensure America's future."

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In terms of meaningful improvements for children and teachers, the reforms of the 80s have given public educators more measurable results than any comparable period in recent history. Yet, there is still an unfinished agenda. There is a growing body of evidence that in spite of such change and improvement some 12 million children were not touched by the reforms of the 80s. These are the millions of youth at-risk throughout America. Their numbers have not decreased during this decade, but have in fact increased. While the problems associated with at-risk youth are multiple and complex, local, state and federal solutions have remained limited. What is clear in this scenario is the need for parents and families to be seen as part of the solution—not the problem. Parents must be mobilized as resources to better serve children at risk.

Since 1985, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and others have been calling attention to the nation's youth who are at-risk. Policymakers in every state have recognized that our nation's youth are not graduating with adequate skills; that school dropouts reach as much as 60 percent in some urban areas; that young people are turning to drugs, alcohol and unwanted early parenting rather than academics and the pursuit of educational excellence.

These concerns resulted in a push for the "At-Risk Youth" issue to be a priority on their agenda. ECS compiled a 50-state database, hosted several national forums for youth at-risk, wrote and distributed working papers and issue statements. What they learned has resulted in five strategies that could have a substantial impact on successful education for those students who are most at-risk of never becoming productive members of society (See Figure 1). It is not surprising that *parent involvement*. has top priority among the five strategies developed (Palaich, 1988).

Figure 1

Five Strategies

Report on Youth At-Risk Project of the Education Commission on the States

- **Parent involvement** strategies include not only parent-child relationships but school-parent-child relationships. Parents and schools must work together to create positive learning environments and to reinforce the importance of education at home and in school. Research has shown that schools and parents united can make a significant difference in the academic success of students, even those with the least advantaged parents.

- **School structuring** focuses on challenging and changing assumptions about how schools and classrooms operate. Innovative curriculums, a variety of pedagogical strategies and skills, new ways to group students and to assess their progress through school, and school-based management and accountability practices offer promise for creating a more equitable education for all students. These practices, which involve the student as an active learner, are especially effective for those who are most at-risk of school failure because they make student learning more interesting and more empowering.

- **Interagency collaboration** concerns the relationship among schools, other youth-serving agencies, governments and communities acting to resolve common problems—in this case, the academic and personal needs of our children. Coordination of resources and services available to the child and the child's family will be the foundation of comprehensive services to meet the needs of the at-risk youngster.

- **Early intervention** strategies focus largely on child care, early childhood education and training new parents to help their children learn. Research shows that children who enter school with adequate health care, little educational exposure and emotional/social problems are likely to fall behind and stay behind.
- **Mentoring** relationships encourage and guide individual growth. The relationship can revolve around academics and/or personal and social activities. One-on-one mentoring, whether by peers, college students or other caring adults, can increase a youngster's motivation to stay in school, for it addresses the major need of at-risk students —the need to build self-confidence and see the connection to a positive future.

1) These ideas are not new. 2) While some schools are using these components with a great deal of success, they are not being implemented in many schools and communities. 3) In too many states current policy and practice does not encourage and support these strategies in the public schools.

Charting a Course for Parent Involvement

If parents become a resource for children at risk, then a plan for actively involving them must be developed. This action plan should address expectations, opportunities and barriers to family/parent connections. Finally, specific programs, policies and evaluation procedures must be in place if parent involvement is to be part of a school's response to meeting the needs of children at risk.

Defining the Dimensions of Parent/School Partnerships: What the Research Says

Research clearly demonstrates that programs designed with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than identical programs that do not involve parents. Schools that relate well to their parents and communities outperform those that do not. Children of parents who help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help (Henderson, 1987).

The research on the relationship between parent involvement and student outcomes in school results in long-term improvements. The literature is widely diverse and there is far more agreement than disagreement about the importance of including parents in the educational process. Yet, educators and education policymakers continue to disagree on actual implementation strategies.

In 1980, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) began a six-year Parent Involvement Project. More than 3,000 parents and 4,000 educators from six states were involved in the study. The results focused on the critical issues of teacher training and parent involvement. The survey results were clear regarding parent involvement training for teachers. Parents favored it; principals expected it; and teachers wanted it. The attitudes of parents and educators were positive, but very little teacher training in parent involvement is in fact occurring at the undergraduate level (Chavkin, William, 1988).

Further, the study showed that parents were eager to assume a variety of meaningful roles at school, from tutor to classroom assistant to decision-maker. But professional educators tend to consider only the most traditional roles, such as "school program supporter" or audience at school functions, to be important. Unfortunately, such discrepancies leave parents feeling frustrated, belittled, and left out. Research on parent involvement tells us that there is no one best way to go about it. Instead, what works is for parents to be involved in a variety of roles over a period of time. The actual focus of parent involvement does not seem to be as important as whether this involvement is well-planned, comprehensive, and long lasting (Gordon, 1978; Becher, 1984).

What Do We Know?

We have learned several important things from our research and studies.

1. The family provides the primary educational environment.
2. Involving parents in their children's formal education improves student achievement.
3. Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long-lasting, and well-planned.
4. The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; there are strong effects from involving parents continuously throughout high school.
5. Involving parents in their own children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the school.
6. Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well-educated to help.
7. We cannot look at the school and the home in isolation; we must understand how they interconnect with each other and with the world at large.

What Do We Still Need To Know?

There are many gaps in our knowledge.

1. What type and intensity of parent involvement is needed to raise the achievement level of low-income and minority children to that expected for middle class students?

2. What forms of parent involvement are most appropriate for students in middle, junior high, and high schools?

3. What resources do parents and educators need in order to work effectively as partners?

4. What are the most appropriate roles for government agencies at the federal, state and local levels in encouraging, supporting, and expanding parent involvement?

5. What contributions can be made by others in the community, such as local service agencies, employers, business and industry, to help families and schools work better together (Henderson, 1987).

Overcoming Barriers to Parent/School Collaboration for Youth At-Risk

Joyce Epstein, a parent involvement researcher at Johns Hopkins University, raises an interesting question. "Which is more important to student development, success and learning—the school or the family?"

The answers revealed through significant and comprehensive studies point to several important guiding principles (Epstein, 1988).

- *School and family connections must take a developmental course.* Efforts can be initiated at all grade levels to inform parents of the learning objectives required to pass the grade, the homework policies, and the reporting procedures. For example, a task force on secondary schools for the Maryland State Department of Education listed 10 activities that high schools should conduct, at least annually, to keep parents informed and involved in their children's education, school programs, and school-related decisions. Schools must be responsive to those family and school issues that become more important in the upper grades—dropout prevention, family planning and pregnancy prevention, and mastery of the basic skills and competencies needed for graduation.

- *Families are changing*. The family that includes two natural parents with mom at home is no longer traditional. Most children live in one-parent homes, reconstituted or blended families, with relatives, or in a variety of other family situations. Family types cross economic lines. Many children come from homes in which the language spoken is not English. They will have rich family customs and parents who have little familiarity with United States schools. Single parent homes, homes in which mothers work outside the home, homes where conflict is high, all have special problems and needs. All families struggle with limited time and they need understandable and useful information about how they can help their children at home to become more successful in school. Unless we examine both family and school structures and practices, we will continue to receive contradictory , often false, messages about the capabilities of unconventional, minority, and hard to reach families.

- *Schools that are similar may differ in their parent involvement practices*. Parochial or private schools, preschools, bilingual schools, Chapter 1 schools, middle schools, and high schools vary in their parent involvement practices across and within categories. Schools of the same type serve different populations, have different histories of involving parents, have teachers and administrators with different philosophies, training, and skills in involving parents. We have learned not to generalize about which schools have stronger or weaker programs.

- *Parent involvement requires site-specific development and leadership*. Programs must be tailored to the experiences and current practices of school leadership. Budgetary support for training teachers and parents must be available. Materials and equipment are needed, and the success of the program must be evaluated and reported.

- *Family requests for involvement are constant.* Parents in all types of schools and at all grade levels express the need for clear communication about their children's attendance, behavior, academic progress, the curriculum, and how to help their children at home. The (common) requests highlight our finding that teachers are the key advisors about how time spent at home on schoolwork, learning games, enrichment, or review can benefit the learning and development of children in specific grade levels and classrooms.

Epstein goes on to identify five criteria for parent involvement. These criteria form a comprehensive program with three primary goals:

1. The improvement of school programs, classroom management, and teacher effectiveness.

2. The improvement of student learning and development.

3. The improvement of parents' awareness of their continuing responsibilities and contributions in their children's development across the school years.

Five Types of Parent Involvement

1. Basic Obligations of Parents

Provide for children's health and safety.

Prepare children for school.

Teach family life skills through the school years.

Create positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior.

2. Basic Obligations of Schools

Communicate with parents about school programs and children's progress.

Vary the form and frequency of communications (such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences) to assure that all parents understand school programs and children's progress.

3. Parent Involvement at School

Volunteers assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school.

Parents attend student performances, sports, or other events; they also attend workshops or other programs for their own education and training.

4. Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

Parents initiate activities or children initiate requests for help.

Teachers share ideas and instructions with parents for monitoring or assisting their children at home in learning activities coordinated with the children's classwork.

5. Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

Parents have decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, school improvement terms, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. Activists in independent advocacy groups monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

Barriers to parent involvement often result from lack of policy direction and planning on the part of schools, rather than apathy on the part of parents. All schools can improve in all five areas.

Finally, improvement requires a planning process that starts with an assessment by each school of its parent involvement practices-strengths, weaknesses, needed directions, and incremental goals over a period of several years.

Parent Involvement and At-Risk Youth

Schools, like most large, complex organizations, tend to be introspective and resistant to the involvement of outsiders, such as parents or social service agencies. Making better connections among the key components of the school/family system is critical, especially for the children who are at-risk of academic failure (Davies, 1988).

It is not surprising that children from low-income and low social status backgrounds have the most to gain from parent involvement. However, most attempts at parent involvement attract and are most accessible to middle class parents (Davies 1987).

A recent study conducted by the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) gathered data for parents and teachers in Boston; Liverpool, England, and several small rural towns in Portugal. The study was exploratory, and not based on random samples, but provided some important information about the relationships between low-income/low-status parents and public elementary schools. The following impressions were drawn from the three countries. They can provide us with a framework for dealing with Barriers to Parent Involvement (Davies, 1988).

1. In a majority of schools in all three locales there is little involvement in the schools by parents, regardless of social class. Most parents of low socio-economic status have little or no contact with the schools. There are some important exceptions: individual teachers, schools, projects, programs, and organizations that are working to involve parents with a special concern for low status families.

2. Communication between the schools and low socio-economic families is primarily negative, focused largely on academic and behavioral problems of children. Most of these parents hear from the school only when their child is in trouble.

3. Many teachers and school officials have traditional views of the proper roles of parents in schooling. They also operate with a conventional middle-class idea of what constitutes "good families" and proper childbearing. Children from families who deviate from these middle-class norms are expected to have trouble in school—to be behavior problems and low achievers. For example, one teacher in Portugal said, "As soon as I saw and talked to the mother, I knew that boy would have trouble in school." A teacher in Liverpool commented, "Well, what can we expect of these children. We do the best we can, but look at the homes they come from."

4. Teachers and administrators appear to think of low-income/low-status families as being "deficient." Many dwell on family content and community conditions such as crime, alcoholism, promiscuity, poor living conditions, and talk little about the strengths that the families and neighborhoods have.

5. Teachers and administrators believe that many parents are "hard-to-reach." They agree that these hard-to-reach parents are primarily those who are poor or from socially marginal groups (e.g., immigrants, people with a different native language), and single parent families regardless of social class. They also, by large, agree that the causes of the problem of parents being hard-to-reach are characteristic of the parents and their homes and neighborhood conditions. Many appear to believe that the parents do not have the time, interest or competence to be involved and that many simply do not care about school nor value education. "Parental "apathy" is a recurring theme. Only a minority of the educator-respondents in this study consider the possibility that school policies and practices or educator attitudes may be part of the problem.

6. Many low income/low social status parents have a low assessment of themselves with respect to being involved in their child's education at home or in the school and low expectations for their own children's achievement in school. They often see themselves as not being very smart and many talk about how they did not do well in school, did not learn much, and were academic failures.

7. In all three countries, most parents express strong interest in their child's education, talk about the importance of schools, and many say they would like to be more involved in the school or at home in helping their children. "I'd like to help but I don't know how" was a theme often expressed in one way or another. There seems to be something flawed in the concept of "hard-to-reach" parents. Most of the parents in our study were "reachable," but the schools were either not trying to involve them or were not knowledgeable about or sensitive to ways to overcome cultural and social class barriers. Much can be done if there is the political will to act. This is evident because there are some schools and some teachers and administrators who are trying and enjoying some success.

Overcoming Barriers to Parent Involvement for Youth At-Risk

If schools hope to overcome the barriers of social class and income with respect to parent involvement, there are certain school-based steps that must be taken to ensure that school professionals are empowered to act. When school practices limit students' chances for education, special correctives are required to ensure all students' full participation.

Correctives should include a strong emphasis on comprehensive planning that involves the school, the family, other institutions and agencies. The plan should attempt to reach out beyond the school. Use of "Parent Coordinators" that provide for home visits and parent support programs are often critical to program success with parents of the at-risk population.

Cornell University has developed a package (concepts and material) called "Family Matters" that provides a program approach to involve parents who are labeled as "hard-to-reach." "Family Matters" targets parents on their own turf; in their homes and neighborhood settings. Home visits by well-trained staff and the development of parent networks and informal groups form the central core of the program. A program description follows:

Family Matters

- The aim is empowerment. Empowerment is a "process through which people become more able to influence those people and organizations that affect their lives and the lives of those they care about" (Vanderslice, 1984). Moncrieff Cochran links empowerment as well as helping individuals to remove obstacles which impede their efforts to achieve equal status in society (Cochran, 1985).

- All families have strengths. One aim of the program is to help families overcome obstacles to their effective functioning. The concept rejects the deficit assessment of "hard-to-reach" parents which places most of the blame for their lack of contact with the school on parental characteristics, attitudes, and conditions.

- Cultural differences are both valid and valuable. Diversity is not a disease to be cured or an aberration to be stamped out by experts.

- Many family structures exist and are legitimate. There is no single pattern that leads to a healthy child and family. Yet, the number and types of resources that parents can marshal is a key factor. Such home-based work is seen as a starting point which can lead parents to be positively involved in the schools their children attend.

School Related Barriers: A Review

Finally, there are at least four school-related barriers that must be changed to eliminate their damaging effects on at-risk youth (Keating, Oakes, 1988). These four barriers were recently detailed in an ECS publication titled: "Access to Knowledge: Removing School Barriers to Learning." The following summaries are offered to reflect the systemic flaws that must be addressed if all children are to benefit from our public schools.

A. *Testing practices, purporting to measure intelligence and ability so that curriculum and instruction can be tailored to individual differences, may actually limit learning opportunities.*

A-1 Insufficient understanding of intelligence and unfair distinctions based on the misuse of tests result in mislabeling, misclassifying and miseducating many students. Too often, educators are overly concerned with classifying students and, as a result, rarely use high-quality, informative assessments to shape instruction policy at the school and to guide policy decisions.

A-2 Popular views of intelligence and ability, as well as perceptions about the distribution of talent in the general population, influence educational practice. What seems fair and reasonable at the moment—tests showing how students compare with others on global characteristics such as mathematics and verbal aptitude—turns out systematically to limit some students' access to knowledge. For the most part, tests of intelligence, ability and achievement simply rank students, separating and segregating them and sorting them for future social participation. Such tests are used to select some students for enriched educational opportunities and slate others for low-level participation. Forecasting failure for some students severely limits their subsequent opportunity in school and later life.

A-3 Few see the possibility of all students becoming persons capable of using knowledge in complex thinking and problem solving in a social context. Because they usually focus on how much fixed potential students have, educators are not primarily concerned with how to nurture and develop students' intelligence and ability (Sirotnik, 1988).

B. *Grouping and tracking practices limit disadvantaged students to the lowest quality knowledge and the most poorly prepared teachers.*

B-1 Aptitude testing is the foundation for school practices that identify individual differences in order to determine which student gets what instruction. Tracking practices begin with the assumptions that differences among students diminish instructional effectiveness, and that students can be assigned fairly and accurately to intellectually homogeneous groups for instruction. This systematic separation of students begins early in their education and forecloses opportunities for enriched coursework for many students. By the secondary level, tracking placements sort students for school opportunities and subsequent social roles.

Children assigned to low-ability classes are taught different, less socially valued knowledge and skills. Emphasis is placed on rote learning, workbooks, kits and easy material. Regardless of ability or motivation, these students' academic mobility is limited. They stand little chance for improved school placement because those in low-track classes are usually denied access to the knowledge necessary to participate in more rigorous and interesting work (Oakes and Lipton, 1988).

Moreover, teachers in low-ability classes tend to be overly concerned with getting students to be punctual, sit quietly and follow directions. They are often seen as less concerned and more punitive. Discipline, class routines and student socializing cut into the class work of low-ability groups, further eroding these students' opportunities for an education of value.

B-2 Students who are poor or members of racial minority groups, especially black and Hispanic youth, are more frequently placed in low ability, noncollege-bound tracks. Black and Hispanic students are more often assigned to vocational programs, training for low-level occupations; they are seldom admitted to programs for gifted and talented students. Younger children who are initially similar in background and achievement become increasingly different both in their achievement and expectations as a result of their group placements. These differences accumulate until they become quite pronounced in high school.

B-3 Tracking and myths and misinformation that support these grouping practices constitute a severe barrier to equal opportunity in education. The quality of curriculum and instruction for the high-ability group and the resources that support advance-track students also work well for lower-ability students.

B-4 Assignment to low tracks can lower student aspiration and self esteem and negatively affect attitudes toward school. Sadly, those children who need more time to learn appear to receive less. Those who have the most difficulty succeeding in school have fewer of the best teachers. Those who stand to benefit from classrooms with rich resources (motivated teachers, successful classmates, enriched curricula) nearly always get the least.

C. Curriculum and instruction practices are fragmented, emphasizing low-level skills and knowledge following narrowly behavioral, rather than cognitive, models of learning.

C-1 Differences in the knowledge available to students in separate groups and tracks reveal serious inequities in education. However, the curriculum and instructional strategies that are common across all tracks are often mediocre even for average and above-average students. These practices also

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deserve scrutiny, with particular attention paid to their implications for the educational access of students at risk.

C-2 Talking and lecturing, along with monitoring seat work, dominate classroom teaching. But a much larger variety of instructional modes and activities is possible and necessary to teach all students. Unfortunately, teachers either lack the skills or do not feel inclined or empowered to implement a more varied repertoire of teaching techniques: coaching, demonstrating, tutoring, symbolically representing, role playing—all in addition to lecturing. Skillfully varying teaching techniques and individualizing instruction are essential strategies to meet the range of aptitudes and differences encountered in classrooms. While most teachers reject the notion that students are passive receptacles for the teacher's knowledge, they nonetheless conduct class as if that were an accurate image for instruction (Goodlad, 1988).

D. *School management practices are centralized, top-down, factory production models which work against responsive and professional decision-making at school sites.*

D-1 School organization and administration are frequently bureaucratic, frustrating genuine access to knowledge. Hierarchical, inflexible, top-down management supports the status quo in schools and limits reform.

D-2 Administratively, schools are modeled after the corporate organization as it developed from the industrial period of the early 1900s. Schools are typically organized like little factories, turning out recognizably similar "products" over time. Administrators are trained in business management methods and often identify with businessmen. Efficient management is often considered more important than creative educational leadership. This perspective distances school leaders from the process of making knowledge accessible to children.

D-3 To equalize access for all students is to question the organization of the school itself. Few of today's school managers are prepared to provide leadership in questioning and reshaping the organizations they direct. There are seldom incentives or rewards for changing the structure or content of schooling.

D-4 Teachers are seen as skilled workers who have little control over resources, program organization, content and methods. This bureaucratic structure, maintained partly by the feminization of teaching, helps keep teaching from developing as a profession characterized by knowledge-based decision making about learning and instruction. Not surprisingly, with other opportunities available to women, we currently face a shortage of qualified teachers—with the most critical shortages in schools serving the most disadvantaged children. Moreover, inadequate teacher education programs, low pay and unattractive working conditions dominated by overregulation and standardization are unlikely to attract, prepare, empower or retain a cadre of teachers committed and able to help all students learn (Darling-Hammond, 1988).

D-5 It is ironic, for example, that many schools and districts are now buying packaged instruction in "critical thinking," taught in some instances by outside specialists, as if thoughtful analysis is an add-on. What these packages communicate is emblematic of the mixed messages schools send—"Think critically, but do it in an orderly, prescribed way."

D-6 Standardization is still preferred over innovation, efficiency counts more than excellence, and conformity to traditional, majority assumptions and expectations about education is more valuable than creativity and innovation. Under these conditions, administrators and teachers are reduced to tinkering around the edges of educational practice rather than responding thoughtfully to individual differences and social change.

Policies, Plans and Programs for Parent Involvement

Policies

The national Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) has recently published a basic primer that outlines how schools can become involved in the area of parent involvement. These policy directives are outlined below.

The formulation of policies should include input from teachers, administrators, parents, students, persons from youth-serving groups, and the community.

The policies should contain the following provisions:

- Opportunities for all parents to learn about the design and execution of the parent involvement program;
- Participation of parents who lack literacy skills or who do not speak English;
- Regular information for parents about their child's participation and progress in specific educational programs and the objectives of those programs;
- Opportunities for parents to assist in the instructional process at school and at home;
- Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents;
- Linkages with social service agencies and community groups to address key family and community issues;

- Involvement of parents of children at all ages and grade levels:

- Recognition of diverse family structures, circumstances and responsibilities, including differences that might impede parent participation. The person(s) responsible for a child may not be the child's biological parent(s) and policies and programs should include participation by all persons interested in the child's educational progress (NEA, 1988).

Further, Dr. Dorothy Rich has designed a 20 Question Checklist that schools and districts can use in evaluating existing policy that concerns family-school initiatives. Saying "yes" to the questions outlined on Figure A gives clear indications of school and district commitment to parent and family involvement.

Figure A

The Forgotten Factor in School Success—
The Family
(Rich, 1985)

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20 QUESTION CHECKLIST

How Does Your Proposed Policy Answer Them?

This checklist of 20 questions has been prepared to help policymakers frame family-school initiatives.

"Yes" answers to the questions that apply to a policy are key to ensuring successful outcomes. It is useful to remember that the partnership between home and school and the relationship between the school and the community arise from separate rationales of different constituencies. Parents have a personal stake in their own children's achievement. Business and other groups are concerned with the overall educational base of the community.

Major categories for the questions below are provided to help policymakers key in to specific and often different constituency needs.

FAMILIES • Does the proposed policy . . .	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Support and assign educational responsibilities to the family?			
2. Provide families with practical information they need to help educate their children?			
3. Respond to family diversity and differing needs of . . .			
employed mothers?			
nonemployed mothers?			
single parent families?			
custodial and noncustodial parents?			
4. Encourage an active role for fathers?			
5. Encourage family self-help and self-sufficiency?			
6. Provide ways for families to help each other?			

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TEACHERS • Does the proposed policy . . .	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Support family involvement as an integral and funded part of the school's services?			
2. Provide teachers with training and information to help them work well with families?			
3. Provide for family involvement at all levels of school, with appropriate programs for differing student and family needs?			
4. Use school facilities for community needs, including care for children before and after school and during the summer?			
5. Find ways to coordinate teacher/school schedules to work with schedules of today's families?			
6. Emphasize early prevention of learning problems as much or more than later remediation in work with families?			

THIRD PARTIES: BUSINESS AND OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS ● Does the proposed policy . . .	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Provide meaningful roles for the private sector?			
2. Connect community agencies in collaborative efforts to reach families?			
3. Involve senior citizens and nonparents in work of the school?			

OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS ● Does the proposed policy . . .	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Provide programs that take advantage of what's been learned through research and experience?			
2. Provide support for complementary, reinforcing efforts of school, families, and community groups?			
3. Include evaluation so that programs can be judged effective or not?			
4. Provide ways to continue programs judged effective?			
5. Encourage sharing of what has been accomplished?			

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Plans

Mobilizing parents to better serve children-at-risk requires careful, serious planning on the part of school professionals. A school-side council should be created which takes responsibility for a plan of action for improving parent involvement. This council should include the principal, teachers, parents, community advocates, and students in the upper grades. Adding a business representative and possibly someone from the district office, a local college or university representative and related social service agencies is also recommended.

The goal behind designating the membership of the council should be "balanced representation of all stakeholders." Teachers should be well represented so that their expertise and needs in this area are aired sufficiently.

One of the best planning documents for Parent Involvement comes from the San Diego County Office of Education. It is appropriately called a Home-School Partnership Planner. It is designed to help school districts develop a Home-School Partnership Plan. (Chrispeels, 1988). At a minimum, all planning efforts should address the following five areas.

Home School Communication: Communication serves as the foundation for all other home-school partnerships activities. It involves the exchange of information between parents, teachers, and school that helps both school and family assist the child in learning. This exchange of information needs to be done in a variety of ways to increase the opportunity for understanding. Communication is needed from both the classroom teacher and the site administrator to the parent. All parents should be contacted on a frequent and regular basis. Equally important, the school needs to develop effective communication channels for parents to communicate with teachers and administrators about their child, their hopes, aspirations, and ideas for their child and for the school.

Home and School as Supporters: Parents and teachers give basic support to each other. Parents express their support by attending to the basic needs of their children at home. This includes feeding, clothing, sheltering and attending to the health and welfare of their children. At school their support is shown through traditional activities such as raising funds for the school, attending open house or student performances, chaperoning field trips, conducting campus clean-ups, or organizing a book fair. Teachers support families by inviting and encouraging them to be an active part of the classroom and school activities. In addition, the school staff supports families through holiday food and clothing drives, special home visits and efforts to help families find needed social services. These activities are ones with which both parents and school personnel tend to feel most comfortable. The school should set up a goal to create a variety of support activities for parents and to have all parents involved in at least one support activity during the course of the year.

Home and School as Learners: Both the school staff and parents should have opportunities to increase their knowledge about how to work together. Parents need information about the school curriculum, school policies, and other aspects of school life as well as opportunities to increase their own parenting skills. Teachers need opportunities to increase their effectiveness in communicating with parents (including conferencing skills), in designing effective home learning and homework activities, and in involving parents, when appropriate, in classroom and school activities.

Home and School as Teachers: It is a crucial fact that parents are child's first and foremost teacher. Schools provide the structured and professional framework to expand, complement, and support home learning as well as teach children the content specific skills from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Parents need guidance and support on how to foster their child's formal learning at school. In addition, teachers and other school staff members need to explore ways they can work together with parents as mutual teachers of the child. Teachers have found that parents can assist as "teachers" in the classroom, and that teachers can be valuable assistants to parents in their homes by providing learning materials or through home visits.

Home and School as Advisors, Decision Makers and Advocates: Parents, teachers, administrators and other school staff should have the opportunities to work together to solve problems, to express their views, to influence other decision makers, and to be advocates on behalf of children. It is important to remember that parents who are willing to be advocates for their child or other children are not enemies of the school, but true friends. Many schools have established school site councils that involve parents and school staff working together. Active PTAs, with school staff involvement, also served as valuable advocacy groups for students and the school. The number of individuals involved at this level will be small but, those who are willing to fulfill this role need training, support, and encouragement.

Conclusions

Much remains to be done and the clock continues to tick in America. Parents and families must be seen as part of the solution to the problems associated with youth-at-risk. Both politics and pedagogy must come together through policy and practice to increase parenting in the everyday operation of our schools. All our evidence suggests that most at-risk youth can learn and will learn given the opportunity, support, and patience. We have the teachers, the tools, and the know-how. The clock is ticking . . .

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MOBILIZING ACADEMIC RESOURCES TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

Gregory A. Smith
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Introduction

Programs for children at-risk have demonstrated the least innovation and creativity in the curriculum. A tendency remains to view students with histories of school failure as needing academic remediation, entry-level vocational training, or special forms of counseling (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez, 1989). As a result, educators who work with this population rarely develop new instructional practices, nor do they stray far from the general-track curriculum offered in most high schools. While it is often true that children at-risk do require additional forms of interpersonal support, it is incorrect to assume that their learning problems are the result of academic inability. Interviews with such students often reveal their intelligence and wit. For many the cause of their failure is not linked to low ability, but to alienation and educational disengagement.

To correct this situation the goal of curricula designed for children at-risk is to encourage their re-engagement in the process of learning. Special interventions created for this population should focus on achieving the high level of involvement characteristic of any effective teaching and learning environment. At the outset, however, it is important to note that this kind of environment has not yet been achieved in many public schools. In their recent study, Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullen and Cusick (1986) argue that approximately two-thirds of the students in American schools are disengaged from the process of learning. Teachers and administrators must create models based on a deeper understanding of the nature of educational engagement itself.

Fred Newman (1988), director of the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools at UW-Madison, has suggested that students want to learn for five reasons: a need for competence, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic interest, the experience of ownership, and social support. He argues that eliciting student involvement in the act of learning is dependent upon addressing these needs. Few contemporary educational settings accomplish this end with any consistency.

A concern about covering course material in a limited amount of time, for example, often prevents students from mastering intellectual skills or disciplines. Most children are graded on what they do not know rather than upon what they do. Often, only a minority of students are able to develop and demonstrate competency in ways that are personally satisfying and validating. For many students, particularly those who do not intend to seek a college education, there is little relationship between what occurs in their classrooms and what they intend to do after graduation. Education thus provides few extrinsic rewards. Because of a narrowly conceived curriculum that focuses primarily on the acquisition of teacher-determined information, many students also have little intrinsic interest in formal learning. Their concerns and involvement are seen as less important than their ability to answer questions correctly. Partly as a result of this, students rarely experience a sense of ownership of what they learn. Education is something that is imposed upon them, not something they have sought themselves. Finally, most classrooms are structured as competitive environments where children are fearful of making mistakes. They experience little social support from peers or teachers, and often only the able are willing to take the risks associated with the process of extending their own competency and knowledge. Children at-risk are particularly vulnerable in a school that disregards these fundamental needs and fails to accommodate the special needs of its at-risk population.

Lauren Resnick (1987) has suggested that one way educators might create more stimulating programs is to direct their attention to the nature of learning outside of school. In the workplace, she has found that learning is often set within a social (context environment) where skills and information are acquired in order to complete specific tasks. She contrasts this with the individualized acquisition of symbolic and generalized knowledge that takes place in most classrooms. I would like to argue that the creation of a genuinely engaging curriculum depends upon meeting the needs that Newmann has outlined, and that one way to achieve this end is to construct learning environments where students, through working with others, are asked to accomplish meaningful and socially valued tasks.

A Model for Mobilizing Academic Resources: The Media Academy

A small team of teachers in an inner-city high school in Oakland, California, is having notable success in developing a curriculum to better serve children at-risk. In this paper, I will describe their program, the Media Academy, as an example of the way in which a group of educators was able to rethink the very nature of teaching and learning and to construct a program around this new vision. Their specific curricular focus, journalism, is not as important as the process used to involve students in this field of study.

The Media Academy opened in the fall of 1986. The teacher primarily responsible for its creation had been the head of the journalism program at Fremont High School. He and a small group of colleagues were concerned about the low level of involvement and poor aspirations of many of their Black and Hispanic students. They suspected that participation in a program aimed at exposing these youth to previously unconsidered occupational possibilities and skills might lead to a greater level of educational engagement. They conceived of a program that would be suitable both for students who expected to enter the job market upon graduation and for others who planned to go to a community or four-year college. Their intention was to excite students about learning and encourage them to envision futures that extended beyond the limited economic opportunities of Oakland's ghettos.

They drew upon the Peninsula Academies model as the basis for developing their program. The first of the Peninsula Academies was created in Redwood City in 1981. The program was the product of a collaboration between the Sequoia Union High School District and Hewlett-Packard (Reller, 1986). Its success led to a statewide attempt to implement the model more broadly; currently ten programs receive funding from the State of California to replicate the practices developed initially in Redwood City (Dayton, Reller and Evans, 1987).

The Academies model demonstrates the clear relationship between school and the world of work. This is achieved through a combination of classroom learning and direct occupational experience. At Sequoia Union High School, for example, students with a wide range of academic abilities but a common history of school failure are trained over a three-year period to become skilled electronics workers. In addition to classes with regular teachers, they are offered instruction by company employees in state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques. They are also guaranteed summer jobs in local factories.

A similar form of collaboration is encountered at the Media Academy. The Academy is a cooperative venture involving the Oakland school system, the Oakland Alliance, a nonprofit community organization that has sponsored several youth programs, and the Institute for Journalism Education. An Advisory Committee composed of executives from local newspapers and from television and radio stations offers assistance in the areas of curriculum development, fund raising, direct instructional assistance, and job placements for students. This interrelationship between local businesses, community service agencies, and schools (a pivotal component of all the Peninsula Academies) provides one of the primary ways in which these programs establish their credibility and significance for the students who participate in them.

With the support of local businesspeople, community leaders, and school district administrators, teachers from the Media Academy recruited students. They visited ninth graders who as sophomores would transfer to Fremont High. They described the program and encouraged students to consider a three-year commitment to the Academy. By the next fall, they had enrolled 44 sophomores (which was increased to their target number of 50 by the beginning of the second semester) and began the process of inducting them into training programs designed to provide them with the skills of professionals who work in print and electronic media occupations. Approximately 40 to 45 sophomores have been added to the Academy each fall since.

Three components of the Media Academy program account for its success at engaging its students in the learning process. These include:

(1) the program's efforts to link academic instruction to activities that are personally important to students;

(2) its focus on experiential education; and

(3) its creation of a social environment that supports cooperative learning.

In terms of academics, all students in the Academy must "major" in journalism during their three years in the program. In journalism courses, they are exposed to increasingly more complex knowledge and skills related to media production. They also take classes in English and social studies taught by a team of four teachers assigned to the Media Academy. Core teachers make a concerted effort to tie their course offerings to the journalistic focus of the Academy. Emphasis is placed on exploring issues such as gang membership, drug abuse, and racism that are of immediate concern to students. Beyond the core classes taught by the Media Academy instructors, students take other required and elective courses throughout the high school.

The experiential component of the Academy is the most innovative and potentially engaging aspect of the program. In addition to their academic course work, students serve on the staffs which produce the school's publications. These include the school newspaper, the yearbook, and a Spanish/English newspaper distributed to residents of the local neighborhood. The Academy hopes to eventually assume responsibility for the printing of newspapers for all other high schools in the Oakland district. Beyond school-based experiences in the area of media production, students are provided with regular exposure to production operations in local newspaper plants as well as at radio and television stations. This exposure includes internships and summer jobs.

The opportunity to be involved in the production of publications that are distributed to their friends, families, and communities makes learning in school a much more public endeavor. Instead of writing for an audience of one, students see their words in print or hear them aired over local radio stations. They begin to grasp the power of language and come to understand the importance of its clear and precise use. Editing is no longer a poorly understood chore imposed by a demanding teacher but a vital activity that when realized conveys an important message. At the Media Academy, inattention or sloppiness become much more visible. This form of accountability can have a powerful impact on student effort and engagement.

The Media Academy also provides students with a variety of new skills and opportunities to share their abilities with others. Not all students are capable of writing equally fine editorials, but editors and reporters make up only part of the staff of any media production. Photographers, camera operators, announcers, word processors, lay-out artists, managers, and advertisement solicitors also play a significant role in creating a newspaper or a television or radio show. In a program with as diverse a range of students as that found in the Media Academy, it is essential that people with a multiplicity of skills find a niche where they can make meaningful contributions and experience success. In most conventional educational settings, only those students who possess verbal and analytical skills receive these opportunities. At the Media Academy, students with a variety of talents can shine.

In its attempt to demonstrate the relevance of its offerings to life outside the school, the Media Academy provides many opportunities for students to grasp the interrelationship between classroom learning, the broader community, and their lives after graduation. Field trips are a central component of the instructional strategy at the Academy. For students brought up in economically deprived neighborhoods, exposure to unfamiliar institutional settings like a newspaper operation or television station opens up new possiblities and new ways of thinking about the future. Exposure to media professionals, many from backgrounds similar to students in the program, contributes to the same end. The field trips, which may involve travel to other cities or to places like Yosemite National Park, also provide students with the opportunity to literally broaden their geographic horizons.

The experiential component of the Media Academy gives students the chance to live their education, not only receive it. They become the actors, the creators of products that possess significance to themselves, their co-workers, and the broader audience of the school and local neighborhood. Within the context of the Media Academy, learning is no longer a passive activity, but one that becomes, in the students' views, worthy of their personal commitment. When they entered the program in the fall of 1986, many of the Academy's first students complained about the program's higher expectations and demands. By the end of the school year, nearly all of them had been won over to the rewards of personal investment and effort. All but two students continued with the program as juniors (Wehlage, 1987).

Part of the reward for being involved in the Media Academy is related to the sense of camaraderie that arises from shared activities and work. As indicated earlier, formal schooling is nearly always presented in individualistic terms. In most classrooms, there are few opportunities for students to work and learn together over a sustained period of time. In the Media Academy, students know that they will be with one another for a three-year period. As a result of taking many of their classes together and of their involvement in a demanding extra-curricular activity, they develop commitment to one another as members of a commonly shared enterprise. Within this context, effort is valued. As one student commented, "No one is put down for doing well in subjects." When people learn, they are learning for one another—learning to contribute to the creation of products that will reflect on them as members of a group. This form of collective support and collective accountability serves as a major incentive for educational engagement and involvement.

The opportunity to work in a program over a period of three years also provides students with the chance to learn not only from other adults but from older and more experienced students. In the production operations at the Media Academy, juniors and seniors demonstrate skills and dispositions to incoming students that are essential to the creation of the school newspapers and yearbook. They, as well as the Academy's teachers, are responsible for introducing sophomores to the program's expectations and ethos. While learning from older peers is beneficial for the younger students, it has great value for the more experienced students, too. They are able to demonstrate their competencies and solidify their own knowledge as they assume the role of teacher or manager. This kind of public demonstration of personal growth and maturity provides an important form of validation for students who often encounter little validation for personal effort in other settings.

An environment that offers this form of support and validation does not exist without careful cultivation. Teachers at the Media Academy are sensitive to their role in helping students to become responsible for their own learning and their ability to interact cooperatively as a team. They demand accountability, but they set their demands within the context of teacher-student relationships built on mentoring and advocacy. Students at the Media Academy speak frequently about their appreciation of teachers who take a genuine interest in them and are committed to their academic success. It is this support that appears to underlie the Academy's ability to involve formerly disengaged students in the process of learning. This point is particularly important when considering curricular reforms. Even in the most promising programs, unless the adults who implement them are able to demonstrate their care and commitment to students, they may not be able to alter their students' previous patterns of educational disengagement and withdrawal.

To summarize, the Media Academy provides a model of curricular and pedagogical innovation that is able to engender student engagement. It achieves this end by providing students with the opportunity to become competent writers, reporters and photographers or competent in media-related vocational skills, under the careful three-year tutelage of adults and more experienced peers. It consciously attempts to demonstrate to students the extrinsic value of their participation in the program, linking school activity to future occupational or educational possibilities. It also offers students many immediate rewards for their involvement and participation including public recognition and summer jobs. The Media Academy concentrates on finding ways to make learning intrinsically interesting to its students, drawing on issues that are of concern to them and allowing them to be involved in exciting and valued activities. Because they volunteer to attend the Media Academy and are able to develop their own interests through participation in the Academy's production activities, students are able to experience ownership of their education. The chance to exercise increasing responsibility and leadership encourages their belief that the program really is their own. Finally, the Media Academy provides a social setting where students feel supported and encouraged, a setting that allows them to take the risks that are essential if they are to extend their range of competency and knowledge.

Overcoming Resistance to Innovation

Despite its promise, the creation of the Media Academy has not been without problems. Resistance has been encountered particularly at the building level from other teachers and some administrators. Because the Academy receives no extra funding from either the district or state, allocations to support the program's lower student-teacher ratio come out of the high school budget. This means that other teachers must accept larger classes, a situation which leads to resentment and charges that members of the Media Academy staff get a softer load. The success of formerly unmotivated students in the program also leads to questions about the legitimacy of the course of study they are being offered. Ironically, other teachers object to what they perceive to be the Academy's attempt to cream off outstanding students from the school as a whole, leaving them with classes composed of less engaged youth.

While students in the Media Academy are distinguished by their desire to participate in a special program and their mastery of fundamental writing skills, they are a highly diverse group in terms of academic ability. Their scores on the California Test of Basic Skills ranged from a low of the seventh percentile to a high of the 99th in reading; and in mathematics from a low of the second percentile to the 96th. Of the 46 students taking the CTBS, 27 were below the 50th percentile and 19 were above in reading. In mathematics, 23 were below and 23 were above the mean. Their primary characteristic prior to entry into the program was their demonstrated low motivation and lack of commitment to schooling. Not having known Media Academy students as ninth graders, however, few other teachers at Fremont High are in a position to recognize the changes they have experienced.

The Academy has also received only tentative support from the building principal who raises periodic objections to articles that appear in the school's paper. Concerned about the image of his institution, he fears public objections to revelations about school problems he would prefer to remain in-house. Finally, even at the district level, the Academy encounters difficulties in gaining approval for equipment or new staffing needs. On occasion, it has only been through the intervention of members of the Advisory Committee that the program has been able to get the district-level permission it needs to develop its offerings.

None of these problems has been solved. However, the presence and political clout of the Advisory Committee and growing state and national recognition of the Academy's success have contributed to its achieving a degree of institutional legitimacy that is essential for its continued existence and evolution. One of the most serious problems facing alternative programs is establishing this form of credibility. Even programs that have been in existence for as long as 20 years encounter threatened budget cuts or termination. To address their program's vulnerability, alternative educators must build a broad base of local public support. Contacts with the media are cultivated in order to gain ongoing community exposure to positive aspects of the program. In some instances, staff members are encouraged to serve on community boards to establish visibility with and support from other decision makers. Moving beyond the classroom to other public arenas seems to be crucial for educators in innovative programs. In this way, they are able to build a network of supporters who in times of crisis will be willing to place pressure upon the local school board and administrators to guarantee the continued funding of alternative programs. For many innovative programs, it is often impossible to diffuse the opposition. What is generally required is the cultivation of allies either within the community or the school district's central office.

The Important Role of Evaluation

In addition to establishing a network of local supporters, demonstrating program effectiveness is another important means for countering, if not diffusing, opposition. Schools which utilize an innovative curricula for children at-risk must be able to demonstrate that such a curriculum is able to increase the level of their students' educational engagement, improve their academic achievement, raise rates of school attendance and retention, and result in more positive post-secondary outcomes. A variety of measures will be required to evaluate changes in these areas. Initially, baseline data for all program participants must be established. Subsequently, an ongoing process of data collection must be initiated. This process should include the collection and summation of relevant data regarding attendance, graduation rates, and grade point averages; regular interviews with students about educational engagement and commitment; exit interviews with all dropouts; follow-up surveys of program graduates; and the periodic administration of standardized achievement tests. This battery of evaluative tools can prove extremely valuable for educators in innovative programs when they are asked to exhibit the value of their efforts before what is often an audience of skeptics.

Recasting the Academies Model for Smaller Districts

As a curricular alternative, the Peninsula Academies model is especially suitable for urban environments that offer a number of internship possibilities in specific occupational areas. In small-town or rural districts where community-school collaboration cannot provide this kind of focus, the development of comparable vocational opportunities may depend on a more individualized approach. A small alternative school in rural California, Sierra Mountain High School, has developed a program called Community-As-School, modeled on the City-As-School in New York City. This program offers students the opportunity to earn elective academic credits while participating in internships at local vocational sites. One student, for example, earns fine arts and English journalism credits for his work at a local radio station. Another is able to earn a health credit through work at a Food Co-op by linking nutrition research to stocking and ordering responsibilities. In this program, a curriculum is developed at each site and is monitored by a job-based resource supervisor who acts as a mentor for the student and as a liaison with school personnel. A concerted effort is made to construct learning experiences that are genuinely academic as well as vocational.

The Experience Based Career Education program at Goodrich High School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, offers a similar blend of vocational and academic learning. Like the Media Academy and the Community-As-School program, it is based on close collaboration between school and community. Students can earn credit for their work in over 250 sites including such diverse locations as hospitals and medical labs, law and veterinarian offices, the police and fire departments, and the local airport and meteorological station. In contrast to the Media Academy and the Community-As-School program, students in Experience Based Career Education can sample from two to eight sites in a semester. An individualized academic program is linked to the specific requirements of different work settings. Students spend four days a week "on the job," and one day at school where they have one-on-one conferences with teachers responsible for overseeing their work. They also meet with peers to reflect upon their experiences. While many students enter the program with no plans to seek education past high school, interacting with adults who have jobs they desire often convinces them that further training is necessary to the realization of their own vocational intentions.

While neither of these examples provides the sustained group experience encountered at the Media Academy, they do meet four of the five criteria outlined by Newman as central characteristics of an engaging learning environment. Both programs offer students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate specific academic and vocational competencies, provide clear extrinsic rewards in terms of linking school-related activities to future jobs, are based upon instructional or occupational areas of intrinsic interest to students, and allow students to assume significant ownership over the development of their own education. If positive, relations with people at job sites can also provide the kind of social support found at the Media Academy.

Conclusion

The primary strengths of each of these innovative curriculums are that they break down the barrier between school and community and provide students with the opportunity to contribute their learning to a collective enterprise, either within the school or at the job site. When students are able to see that academic effort can be translated into meaningful work and socially valued products, learning can become a source of personal validation and hope. When that learning is also rewarding, intrinsically interesting, and clearly tied to personal concerns, schools can develop in their at-risk students the level of engagement and commitment that underlies educational success.

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About the Author

Gregory Smith is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has been working with Gary Wehlage and the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools for the past three years, studying programs for at-risk children. He is the co-author of Reducing the Risk: Schools As Communities of Support.

MOBILIZING THE PUBLIC TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

Barbara L. White, Ph.D.
Community Relations and Public Information
Jackson Public Schools
Jackson, Mississippi

Introduction

> If we continue to squandor the talents of millions of children, America will become a nation of limited human potential. It would be tragic if we allow this to happen. America must become a land of opportunity for every child.
>
> —Children In Need Committee for Economic Development

Each year America loses approximately one million students from its public schools as dropouts. Dropouts cost the nation more than $240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetime. This does not include the billions more spent for crime control, welfare, health care, and other social services.

Each state contributes to the loss. Each state suffers related economic stagnation and a reduced quality of life for many of its citizens. Each state must therefore address the problem of "at-risk" children with valid research, and with programs of early and sustained intervention. **Essential to the launching of new programs is an effective plan of public mobilization to generate optimal support and involvement** in programs that address the needs of our at-risk youth.

How aware is the public of the "at-risk" problem? Do citizens feel that the problem should be a public education concern? Is there a consensus that public education has the capability to solve the problem? Does the public perceive drop-out prevention as its problem? New educational programs need community support. Each community is a microcosm of the nation. It includes at least a dozen publics. It is the educational groups, the professionals, fraternal members, women's and garden clubs; it is business and industry, civic leaders, youth, media, labor leaders, church leaders, and the elderly. It is the community-at-large which may often react differently as a group than its members would individually.

Those who hold specific views, attitudes and opinions rarely adopt a laissez-faire posture toward a new program. They are more often opinionated, dogmatic, and vociferous. Their stance can result in the success or failure of any new program.

On a larger scale, each region within the state has its own pulse, its own heartbeat, different feelings and emotions, different causes for agitation and concern, and different reasons for being satisfied or dissatisfied. Specific objectives of a community relations program may differ depending on composition (professional, blue collar, etc.), community demographics (parents, nonparents, retired, etc.), and type, e.g., rural, suburban, inner-city. There is, however, a common thread. **The at-risk program should be recognized and perceived as an asset to the community or the region.**

Community composition should be analyzed prior to development of the marketing plan or should be included as an initial step. All these variables must be considered and addressed if an at-risk program is to be successful. In essence, the early focus of any public mobilization plan to better serve at-risk students should:

1. Determine attitudes toward the problems of "at-risk" students;

2. Assess what the public expects of its schools;

3. Provide adequate information about the far-reaching effects of the "at-risk" problem;

4. Develop effective information that acts as a catalyst for community support and involvement;

5. Recognize the essential role that every school employee plays in providing attitude-forming information to the community.

Effective public relations can assist in any motivating effort. With adequate planning, those who are concerned with the unmet needs of at-risk youth can:

- contribute to the creation of positive attitudes where none exist;

- intensify existing positive attitudes;

- convert existing negative attitudes; and

- sometimes neutralize persistent negative attitudes.

In summary, the goal of the mobilization plan should be to raise the consciousness of the public to the "at-risk" problem, garner the support of the citizens for a statewide response to the "at-risk" problem, and engage an effective percentage of the populace in active program participation.

How To Get There

Program Publicity

The introduction of a new program provides an opportunity for the schools, and particularly public information officers, to make a tangible contribution on behalf of at-risk students.

Skillful publicity can and should be marshalled before, during and after the program's introduction. The objective is to **sell the program**, to **gain support**, and to **maximize involvement**. The program must be visible, viewed as a necessity, and appreciated for what it offers. It must represent quality and generate confidence in its merit and feasibility.

Conventional advertising techniques can be used, but publicity stemming from sound public relations planning adds a competitive edge to the initiative. Program publicity, after all, is the one facet of the public relations portfolio most closely allied to sales.

Program publicity, however, does not simply mean reams of copy which extols the program's virtues. More specifically, it means launching and directing the program through the following stages:

1. Unveil the program—not once but literally hundreds of times;
2. Promote the ad campaign behind the program;
3. Tell the story of the people who developed it;
4. Report on community acceptance;
5. Report on the educational community's reactions;
6. Tell the story of the program's success;
7. Emphasize advantages to the community;
8. Report on trends throughout the United States;

9. Tell success stories of other states and other communities.

For maximum impact, the program's story must reach people from accessible sources. A recent Gallup Poll(1988) indicates that most people gain information from the following sources:

• Television	32%
• Newspapers	52%
• Radios	36%
• Parents of students	33%
• Other adults	32%

Statewide Task Force

Equally important to maintaining local recognition is the organization of a statewide public relations task force. The task force can play an essential role in combining and coordinating the communications resources of the state. This public relations task force is best suited for overcoming parochial problems, resolving personality differences, and building necessary cohesion (See Chart 1).

Essentially, the public relations task force reaches the local public in two ways:

- By person-to-person contact through speeches, meetings with civic leaders, annual meetings, special events, personal letters, employee contacts, participation in civic affairs, support of education programs, religious assemblies, public service events, open houses, and ceremonial affairs.

- By use of local media such as television, radio, newspapers, advertising in direct mail, newsletters, billboards, displays, films, brochures, exhibits, theatre and sports programs, business signs, etc.

The Public Relations Plan for a Local Community

The Public Relations Plan should adhere to the following guidelines:

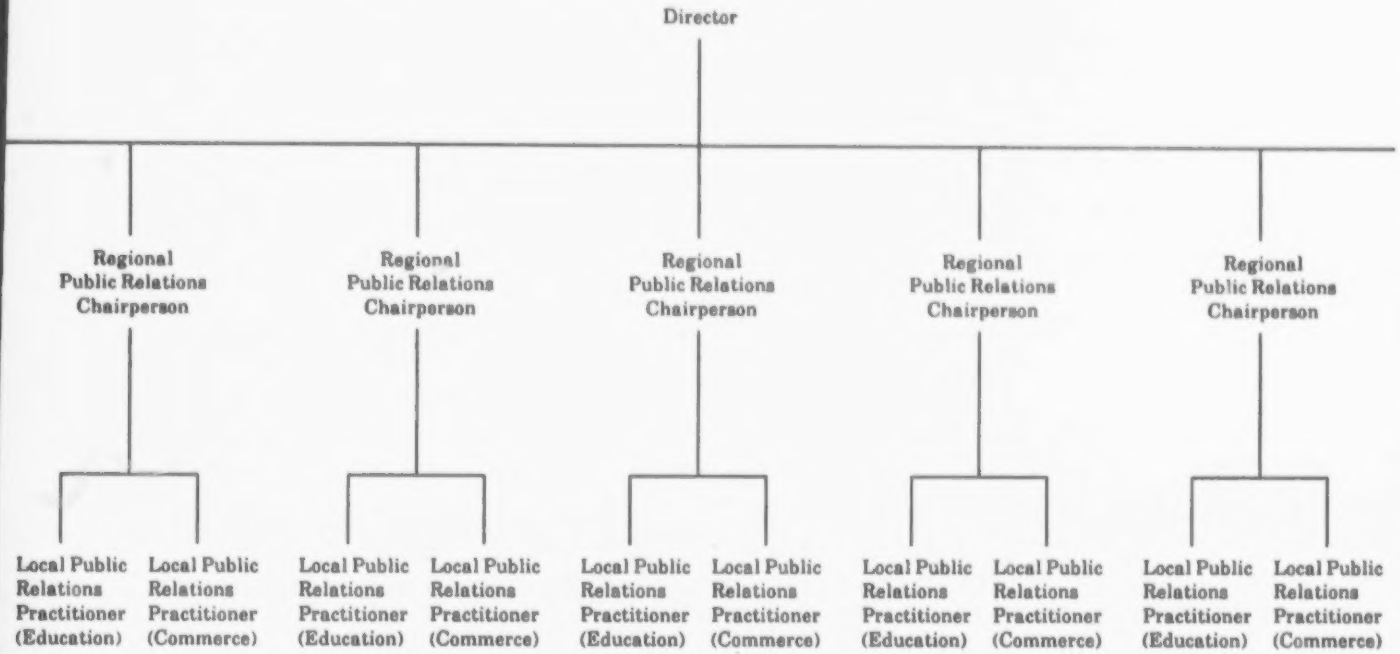
1. Select members of the **Public Relations Task Force** who represent the groups involved with at-risk youth and their families;

2. Appoint a **director** of the task force;

3. Conduct awareness/opinion/attitude surveys (See Chart 2);
4. Analyze the surveys;
5. Organize and staff an "at-risk" communications hot line and publicize telephone numbers in all presentations;
6. Conduct workshops for all those involved in the public relations component of the at-risk program;
7. Organize a research and development effort either through the state Department of Public Instruction or through a university School of Education.

Chart 1

Public Relations Task Force


Director
Regional Public Relations Chairperson
Regional Public Relations Chairperson
Regional Public Relations Chairperson
Regional Public Relations Chairperson
Regional Public Relations Chairperson
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Education)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Commerce)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Education)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Commerce)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Education)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Commerce)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Education)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Commerce)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Education)
Local Public Relations Practitioner (Commerce)

(Number of local Public Relations practitioners depends on size of region)

Chart 2

Sample Awareness/Opinion/Attitude Survey

1. Do you feel the drop-out problem in Wisconsin is
   critical ____ major ____ minor____?
2. Are you concerned about these problems?
   yes ____ no ____
3. Do students who drop-out of school affect the Wisconsin economy?
   yes ____ no ____
4. Do students who drop-out of school affect you?
   yes ____ no ____
5. Students who are identified as potential dropouts are called "at risk." Do you feel something should be done for "at risk" children?
   yes ____ no ____
6. What should be done?
   a. Should counselors be provided for all grades?
      yes ____ no ____
   b. Should five-year-olds be required to attend kindergarten?
      yes ____ no ____
7. Should special services be provided for students who are expelled from regular programs?
   yes ____ no ____
   a. Special schools ____yes ____no
   b. Tutors ____yes ____no
   c. Mentors ____yes ____no
8. Should special programs be developed for students who want specific vocational education training?
   yes ____ no ____
   a. Vocational schools ____yes ____no
   b. Career Development centers ____yes ____no
9. Should there be schools for the performing arts?
   yes ____ no ____
10. If additional programs/services are needed and a tax increase is necessary, would you vote for an increase in taxes?
    yes ____ no ____
11. Are you a parent of school-aged children?
    yes ____ no ____
12. Are you a parent?
    yes ____ no ____

13. Are you a grandparent?
yes ____ no ____

14. Are you on a fixed income?
yes ____ no ____

15. Would you mind indicating how you receive most of your information? Is it by. . .
a. Radio ____ b. Television ____
c. Newspaper ____ d. School items children bring home ____
e. Billboards ____ f. Bumper stickers, et. ____
g. Friends ____ h. Other ____

16. Race: Black ____ White ____Other ____ Decline to answer ____

17. Sex: Female ____ Male ____

18. Educational Level: ____ High School Graduate
____ Technical/business school ____ Some college
____ College graduate ____ Graduate school
____ Did not graduate from high school

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8. Develop a Five-Year Mobilization Plan (see Chart 3) with specific goals, objectives, activities, and timelines. The Five-Year Mobilization Plan should:

    a. Assess public awareness/opinions/attitudes

    b. Evaluate programs and services being offered

    c. Study programs and services to be offered

    d. Determine program strengths and weaknesses

    e. Determine resources, both internal and external

    f. Assess "environmental" factors:

        1) Legislature

        2) Public awareness/opinions/attitudes

    g. Determine campaign theme

    h. Develop campaign print materials

    i. Develop campaign visual materials

    j. Develop packet of materials for the following:

        1) Local and state opinion makers

        2) Local and state Speakers Bureau

        3) Key communicators in the community

Activating Groups, Organizations and Individuals

If you want the public to move towards acceptance and support of an at-risk program, you must give them reasons to do so. The late Dr. Abraham H. Maslow, professor of psychology at Brandeis University, described a hierarchy of human needs. The more elementary the unsatisfied need, the stronger it is. But once that need is satisfied, the next higher need comes into play.

An example of how to direct a campaign so that it speaks to the needs of every citizen can be seen in David Martin's article in *American School Board*

Journal (February 1988), "Wake up: The American Dream is Fading and Our Future Is At Risk." Martin cites the dilemma that is facing each state and the nation. According to Martin, "The U.S. middle class has a fertility rate that is below replacement level (is, in effect, dying out), while our underclasses are reproducing or immigrating at population explosion levels." Martin continues,

> ". . . We need more new and prosperous workers to keep Social Security and other retirement and health programs afloat. In 1950, each retiree was "supported" by the contributions of 17 workers. Today, each retiree must depend on the contributions of 3.4 workers, and sometime soon after the year 2000, each retiree will be supported by only one-and-a-half workers.
>
> "When I retire, I want my one-and-a-half workers to be prosperous, making big, fat middle-class deductions to Social Security. I want to be able to walk along streets made safe by the middle-class concern for law and order."

Chart 3

Model Format of Specific Activities in Mobilization Plan

Public Mobilization Plan	Implementation Schedule				
	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
External Audiences					
A. Graphic presentation with brochure handout to representatives of:					
I. Chambers of Commerce					
II. PTA Councils					
III. Public Schools					
IV. Key Communicators					
V. Adopt-A-School Coordinators					
VII. Legislature					
B. Public Relations Packet to:					
I. Opinion speakers					
II. Speakers bureaus in place at various businesses, organizations					
III. Public Service Announcements on radio and television					
IV. News items to newsletters of various businesses					
V. Bill Boards					
VI. Slide Presentations					

S	-Study	E	-Evaluate
P	-Plan	PI	-Pilot
I	-Implement	R	-Recommendation
▸	-Budget Item	O	-Ongoing

Guidelines for motivating or activating groups are summed up in four statements:

1. If a basic need is satisfied, the group, organization or individual will not be moved by an appeal to that need.

2. If a basic need is not satisfied, that need will motivate the group, organization or individual, but only until it is satisfied.

3. If a lower need is satisfied, a group, organization or individual will not be moved by an appeal to a higher need even though the higher need is also unsatisfied.

4. A group, organization or individual is always open to a **challenge to creativity**, provided they feel secure about basic needs.

In summary, know your groups, the organizations and the individuals you hope to activate. Do not treat individuals in a group as though they are all the same. There are four factors that quarantee success in motivation. They are:

- *Relevance*. The program is based on what the public cares about.

- *Convenience*. Successful programs make it easy for the public to participate.

- *Publicity*. Let people know what is planned.

- *Commitment*. A successful At-Risk Program demands time and commitment on the part of the program staff and the public relations staff, but there is always a clear purpose and goal directing the effort.

Opposition Diffusion and Effort Sustenance

Part of the success of any public relations program lies in how well opposition and/or criticism are met. The opposition may focus on either the program or the public relations effort. The manner employed to handle the opposition will significantly affect the success of the program and the total public relations effort. It is useful to remember that opposition and/or criticism are best handled with consistency, thoroughness, and timeliness. Effective planning of a public relations program includes anticipating opposition and/or criticism and developing strategies for positive reaction.

The planning also provides for proactive strategies that thwart possible opponents. Using a survey to assess public awareness/opinions/attitudes will identify opponents and their supporting rationale.

Some opposition may be ignored. In reality, people are rarely, if ever, in perfect agreement on any issue, or 100 percent supportive of any program.

Evaluate opponents, analyze the preplanned opposition diffusion strategies, and react according to the size, potential power, and influence of the opposition. It is, however, much more effective if the public relations task force is proactive with a positive focus.

To sustain the public information effort, be honest, clear, factual and timely.

Additionally, effort sustenance should focus on:

- Continuing assessment of communication needs;
- Involving staff and community citizens on all levels (statewide, regionally and locally); and
- Making certain staff and public participants (those involved in publicly mobilizing the program) are still committed to implementation.

Evaluation

The evaluation of a public relations plan utilizes the multi-faceted communications approach (See Chart 4). The evaluation should generally focus on:

Two-way communication—A good public relations program includes listening as much as talking. Column inches of newspaper space and minutes of radio or television time are important, but public relations based on what's happening is essential.

A systematic approach—Use of the newspapers to the exclusion of all other media won't get the message conveyed. Community newsletters alone won't solve the problem. The public relations task force must systematically identify each segment of the public and decide on the best medium to communicate with that public.

A continuous program—A good public relations campaign is a year-round operation.

Two effective approaches to evaluation are a communications audit and an evaluation of specific public relations objectives.

A *communications audit* is a study of the public relations task force's communications. It is designed to analyze the public relations program's needs, goals, activities and capabilities. It involves the task force and "At-Risk" Program leaders. A comprehensive audit will uncover communications gaps and suggest:

- short and long-term goals
- priority of those goals
- themes/issues to be emphasized
- priority list of publics
- community pulse
- communications strategies that are working
- new communication strategies that are warranted
- a measurement device for future evaluation.

Chart 1

Evaluation Overview

- ___ Were the needs of the program clearly identified?
- ___ Were the needs of the individual component projects clearly identified?
- ___ Do stated goals conform to the identified needs?
- ___ Do the specific project activities target specific goals?
- ___ Was each activity planned with appropriate staff involvement?
- ___ Was attention given to utilizing special staff talents?
- ___ Were individual task force members given responsibilities in line with their degree of ability to handle such responsibility?
- ___ Did everyone involved in putting the project into operation understand the project goals?
- ___ Was attention given to mustering internal support for external public relations efforts?
- ___ Did specific activities target specific audiences?
- ___ In implementation, was care given to the keys of honesty, clarity, factualness, and timeliness?
- ___ Was some thought given to planning for the unexpected?
- ___ Did the program stay within its budget?
- ___ Was the budget adequate to the task?
- ___ Were measures taken to insure optimum performance through complete presentation analysis (i.e., did you check to see if the projector worked before the program)?
- ___ Did built-in feedback insure immediate evaluation data?
- ___ Were other evaluation measures planned as an integral part of the implementation phase?

____ Was thorough consideration given to information received through unplanned channels, such as anecdotal information in telephone calls, casual conversations, and letters?

____ Was thorough consideration given to information obtained in the form of criticism?

____ Did the information gathered in the evaluation serve as the basis of project revision?

Major topics covered in a public relations program audit include:

- Administrator openess and support of the public relations task force;
- State, regional, local demographics;
- Objectives and goals of the at-risk and the public relations programs;
- Organization and staffing of public relations program efforts;
- Existing public relations programs, activities, etc.;
- Attitudes toward existing public relations program (strengths and weaknesses);
- Needs and expectations from all consulted groups.

A Public Relations Program's audit follows five basic steps:

Step 1. Researching—reviewing current programs and data;

Step 2. Finding out what "we" (insiders) think;

Step 3. Finding out what "they" (communities) think;

Step 4. Appraising the difference between "we" and "they", i.e., a public relations balance sheet of assets and liabilities;

Step 5. Recommending how to close the gaps uncovered in the audit.

The *evaluation of public relations* objectives is defined by Nazin and Allen in Public Relations: Management by Objectives as a system that focuses on results rather than activities. The "objectives" approach to evaluation provides for the tying of program objectives to program goals. It also permits focus on those areas where it is felt that measurable results will do the at-risk program the most good.

A public mobilization program must coordinate the efforts of business, education, parent organizations, civic groups and all levels of government, generating the political will to develop programs that foster productive lifestyles for disadvantaged youth. This coalition must work towards the full development of potential so that students share, as contributing citizens, in the American dream of freedom, opportunity, and economic well-being.

Exemplary Programs

Below is a list of resources that discuss exemplary models throughout the United States:

Cates, Carolyn S., "Industry-Education Collaboration for School Improvement," pp. iii, iv, 1-36, 1981. Reviews the basic features of collaborative councils; briefly profiles a statewide council and describes in detail the history and functions of one local council.

Schilit, Henrietta, School-Business Partnerships/Adopt-A-School, The Private Sector Youth Connection, Volume 1: School to Work, pp. 43-52, 1982. Outlines a typical model and profiles programs in Oakland, Ca., Seattle, New Orleans, Memphis, Sagus, Ca., and Montgomery County, Md., giving examples of activities and ingredients for success.

Nation Urban Coalition, "Collaborative Programs in Urban Schools: Case Studies," Summary of Findings; ROP/S.T.E.P., pp. xiii-xvi, 4-5, 46-73, 1980. Reports the conclusions of a national search for exemplary collaborative programs, a brief description of four programs, and a detailed description of decentralized classes conducted by Security Pacific National Bank with the Los Angeles City Schools.

Stodghill, Ronald. "The St. Louis Partnership Program: A Local Solution to a National Problem," Proceedings: The Third Conference of the University/Urban Schools National Task Force: What Works in Urban Schools, pp. 63-86, 1982. Outlines the steps involved in creating workable partnership programs; discusses the activities of a program that concentrates on using community resources to reinforce teachers' curricular goals.

Calvin, Allen D., and Patricia Keen, "Community Foundations for Public Schools," Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 126-127, October 1982. Examines the development and work of the San Francisco Educational Fund and the factors contributing to its success.

Grey, Sandra T., "How to Create a Successful School/Community Partnership," Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 65, no. 6, pp. 405-409, February, 1984. From the National School Volunteer Program's experience, presents a tested model for developing partnerships; includes profiles of nine partnerships from across the United States.

About the Author

Dr. Barbara White is the Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, Jackson Public School District, Jackson, Mississippi, where she directs the community relations and public information program. Her latest article, "Districts Grapple with Drop-Out Problems," was published in the American Association of School Administrators journal, *The School Administrator*. She is also an adjunct professor at Jackson State University.

MOBILIZING STATE LEVEL SYSTEMS TO BETTER SERVE CHILDREN AT-RISK

STATE GOVERNMENTS AND AT-RISK YOUTH: THE CRITICAL LINK

Richard H. DeLone
Public/Private Ventures
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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This report argues that state governments can and must take the lead in solving the growing, debilitating and seemingly intractable problems of youth "at risk." The report defines the basic problem, summarizes the research on effective responses, and makes the case that the problem cannot be solved without strong initiatives led by state governments.

The Need

By conservative estimates, one in five youths in the nation is at-risk. Demographic projections suggest that this proportion will grow as the size of the youth cohort shrinks, raising the twin specters of a serious national labor shortage and a large population on welfare.

Most state governments have the means and the opportunity to assume leadership in serving at-risk youth, often without passing a single new bill or appropriating an additional dollar. In addition, state government has greater potential than any other level of government to initiate and carry through the *coordinated policies and programming strategies* that are required. States provide much of the funding for education, juvenile justice, child welfare and other youth services. They have considerable discretionary control over local expenditures of federal funds for youth and possess critical legal and regulatory powers to set policies that govern local programming.

State efforts, with regard to at-risk youth, are tied to two current reform movements. One, the *educational excellence* movement, which has in many cases been led by state governors, has resulted in stiffer academic and graduation requirements. While these requirements may challenge academically talented students, they offer little to at-risk youth who often lack basic mathematics and reading skills. Many experts and some governors have expressed concern that the "excellence" movement could result in increasing school dropout rates if the learning deficiencies of at-risk youth are not addressed with equal commitment.

The other related movement is *welfare reform*. Here, state concerns and the needs of at-risk youth are more compatible. Frustrated by the inability of current policies—including work requirements and "workfare" programs—to keep large numbers of recipients off the welfare rolls, officials in many states have begun to target education, employment and other services to young welfare recipients. Such efforts are intended to prevent long-term welfare dependency with its high individual and social costs. The apparent effectiveness of coordinated services to welfare recipients in programs like the Massachusetts ET Choices program, where 86 percent of participants were off the relief rolls a year later, has provided empirical encouragement for more comprehensive and coordinated programming at the state level.

There is a paucity of research on effective programs to serve at-risk youth, but some key principles have become clear:

1. No single program approach can solve all youth unemployment problems. The complexities of the problems and the limitation of programming knowledge probably rule out the discovery of such a panacea in the future.

2. Programs with several service elements are more likely to produce results than single-service efforts. Thus, programs which use work experience as a panacea might be ineffective alone but are potentially effective when offered with other program elements. A coherent array of programs is usually needed to serve the varying needs of a community's at-risk youth population.

3. Programs of longer duration are more likely to produce lasting effects. Likewise, actual length-of-stay in a program can usually be correlated with positive outcomes, a vexing issue in view of the generally high rates of attrition that even the best programs experience.

4. Youth needs tend to follow a sequence by age. Education-based services are usually most appropriate for younger youth, while labor market-oriented services (particularly skills training) are more appropriate for older youth.

5. Targeting program efforts to the neediest groups has strong and clear payoffs and is an essential element in a youth employment strategy.

6. School dropout prevention should be a pivotal aim of youth programming; however knowledge on conducting effective in-school dropout prevention programs is sparse.

7. The quality of program design and of staff and operations, the stability of program operations and funding over time are vital factors to program performance.

The challenge to policy-makers and program managers alike is to create the conditions under which these basic principles can be applied. Note that the first five principles concern the development of effective youth-serving systems that make available a continuum of integrated service options and permit continuous programming, of sufficient duration, to affect individual development.

In contrast, programming for at-risk youth in most communities today is anything but integrated, sequential and systematic. Instead, single services, often of short duration, are applied by a variety of agencies in a discontinuous fashion. Target populations, reporting criteria, service areas, and regulations differ from agency to agency and from funding source to funding source. Under such conditions, it is extremely difficult to develop the coordinated, comprehensive, continuous service delivery systems that are needed. The result is that dollars are often spent to produce either short-term gains that dissipate after the program ends or no gains at all.

Indeed, the fragmented nature of service delivery as it now exists is close to a design for failure because single services delivered in an uncoordinated manner cannot address the multiplicity of problems the youth at-risk faces. If a student needs glasses, has a drinking problem or comes from a pathological family, the best education program in the world will not be enough. Similarly, if a dropout lacks the basic academic skills to succeed in a training program, the guarantee of a good job at the end of the program will not matter.

The need for coordinated service strategies is widely recognized. As the National Governors' Association (NGA) noted in a recent newsletter:

> There is a growing awareness, particularly among the education, employment and training communities, that the problems of at-risk youth, high dropout rates and illiteracy cannot be solved by any group in isolation. No agency has the necessary mandate or resources to do the whole job. It is difficult to develop a strategy around improvements to individuals when our entire governmental system, whether at federal, state or local levels, is organized around major functions such as education, health, job training and welfare. This means, quite simply, that while government is part of the solution, the apparatus of government is part of the problem. (National Governor's Association, *Labor Notes*, No. 10, November 21, 1986, p. 11.)

These principles underscore the importance of developing effective serving systems that are capable of producing integrated, sequential and systematic programming strategies.

Why States?

State government is uniquely positioned in the federal system to plan and implement the coordinated strategy required to get maximum benefit from the scattered governmental programs and services for at-risk youth. States fund a major portion of youth services, with education, juvenile justice and welfare being paramount. States bear primary responsibility for the legal and regulatory framework within which local governmental entities, school districts and other agencies deliver many of these services. States are also legal guardians for many at-risk youth, such as abused and neglected children and juvenile delinquents. States have varying degrees of control over how localities spend federal discretionary program funds for youth. These responsibilities give states the means to:

- Frame policy and set broad priorities;
- Plan strategies for coordinated service delivery;
- Influence the practices of basic institutions with regard to at-risk youth; and
- Maintain continuity of efforts and establish quality controls.

The billions of dollars controlled by state governments include funds for categorical programs that target disadvantaged youth, such as Chapter 1 Federal Education Act funds, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) 8 percent funds, and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) health funds. Not all these dollars can or should be devoted to at-risk youngsters, of course, but they are evidence that states control or influence an enormous pool of resources that can be used to support targeted youth initiatives.

A cursory review of how these funds are spent in many states reveals that often very little effort is expended to ensure that funds are used in accordance with the seven "best-practice" principles previously cited. In summary, current resources, which are already inadequate, are all too often not being optimally used.

Obviously, all levels of government should assume a role in developing a more coherent, better-coordinated policy for at-risk youth, and local government must ultimately manage or implement that policy in a competent manner if it is to be translated into effective programs. However, state government has a distinct advantage over other levels of government in establishing leadership in youth initiatives, since the state deals directly with the institutions that deliver services.

Treating the problems of at-risk youth with fragmentary local services—even good services—is a prescription for eventual failure. State government is best positioned to provide the antidote—a coherent, coordinated policy and programming strategy. Unless programs for at-risk youth receive substantial new funding, which appears improbable, improved strategies for using existing resources (which require improved public management and incentives at the state level) offer the *only* promising response.

In recent years, states have gained considerable influence over the federal dollars that are the primary support of many services for at-risk youth, such as education, employment, health, and juvenile justice. States directly fund many youth services (education being paramount) and bear primary responsibility for the legal and regulatory framework within which local governments deliver these services. Some states operate youth services directly. Thus, states have vast but generally latent potential for serving at-risk youth.

In addition to having these considerable legal and fiscal tools, states are well-positioned to coordinate the activities of local youth service agencies controlled by diverse local jurisdictions. Without the intervention of an extra-organizational convener, few localities are able to take the critical step of bringing the right parties to the table to develop coherent local strategies.

The State as Convener and Catalyst

The advantage of state government as an administrator of youth services is not limited to its control of or influence over the expenditure of federal funds. Nor is it limited to the funding it provides, the laws and regulations it promulgates, or the responsibilities it has traditionally assumed for various groups of at-risk youth. Even when strong local initiatives and performance have been demonstrated, there is a strong rationale for the state to undertake policy initiatives.

First, state regulations, varying definitions of eligibility for service, and a hodgepodge of planning and reporting requirements often make it extremely difficult for localities to develop coherent systems for serving at-risk youth. The state is the level of government at which the administrative and legal complexities of coordinated programming can most efficiently be worked out.

Second, political subdivisions do not always lend themselves to service coordination. For example, social services may be delivered on a countywide basis; JTPA service delivery areas may be a multicounty consortia; health services may be managed by a town or city; and education by a local school board with independent taxing authority and a boundary not coterminous with the other services. In such circumstances, an extra-organizational convener with clout is needed to bring the principals to the table to even begin discussing a coordinated approach to youth needs. The convener must also provide the fiscal, regulatory or other incentives for planning and implementing such an approach.

Finally, even in large cities where service and political jurisdictions are coterminous, the literature on coordination makes it clear that an extra-organizational force is usually needed. Before state government can convene local entities to discuss coordinated planning and service delivery, however, it must first demonstrate the capacity for coordination itself. State-level agencies must show practical evidence that they are leading the way in the coordination of services.

Important issues to consider include:

- the critical role of intermediary organizations—of neutral staff who belong to no agency but instead are dedicated to brokering collaborative approaches that meet the goals of all,
- the importance of middle managers in achieving effective collaboration,
- more effective use of existing discretionary dollars to develop innovative programs or initiatives,
- making use of matching fund requirements,
- a high degree of state/local interaction,
- an emphasis on the development of programs, not on the production of reports.

It should be stressed that the driving force behind state initiatives has largely been middle management. There are inherent limits on the time and interest of cabinet-level state officials. Lacking strong personal commitment or a powerful mandate from the governor or state legislature, such officials are unlikely to devote much attention to programs for which they receive little recognition and that serve a relatively small and powerless constituency. However, middle managers in charge of youth programs often benefit professionally from interagency collaboration, even if that benefit is limited to information sharing.

Lessons from Experience

States face formidable obstacles in crafting coherent strategies for serving at-risk youth. While there are signs of change, state political leaders have generally shown little interest in this powerless and hard-to-serve constituency. There are few incentives for top state officials to give high priority to the development of statewide interagency youth initiatives. Fragmentary databases, turf rivalries, structural barriers to interagency coordination, limited time horizons and local animosity toward state activism are among the significant barriers states must overcome in fulfilling their potential for assuming a leadership role.

We should first summarize the broad goals that any initiative must accomplish. While the precise mix of programs required will vary from state to state and community to community, the basic goals for effective services to at-risk youth are universally applicable. The ultimate goal, of course, is to provide youth with steady employment in jobs that yield adequate income, stability and growth for prolonged self-sufficiency. The key steps on the road to meeting this goal are the following:

- Achievement of adequate basic academic skills;
- Attainment of basic educational credentials—at minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent;
- Development of employability skills; i.e., the general knowledge, attitudes and behaviors needed to get and hold a job;
- Development of vocational skills either through classroom experience or on-the-job training; and
- Accessibility of critical support services that enable individual youth to maintain the needed motivation and direction to attain self-sufficiency.

These are broad goals that do not define specific actions. They *do* identify the basic needs that any initiative should address with serious and substantial program components in order to increase the number of youth it reaches successfully.

Recent initiatives in several states have produced modest but significant results. Despite the considerable diversity of these efforts, common themes emerge that appear to be critical to their success. These include both organizational and programmatic principles that together constitute a framework for effectiveness.

Organizationally, successful state initiatives appear to require the following:

1) A state-level coordinating mechanism;

2) Incentives for local participation and creative leveraging of state resources; and

3) Encouragement of local creativity within well-crafted guidelines.

Strategies

While a precise programming strategy depends on individual state and local needs, certain critical management and programming strategies merit particular attention. These are:

1) Increased use of schools as centers for integrated human service delivery. There is considerable evidence that integrated human services are an effective dropout prevention component. An effective referral system, coordinated by a school-based case manager, is one mechanism for integrating services. A better approach, however, is locating services in the schools.

2) Development of more appropriate basic educational offerings for youth at-risk, a need obscured by most recent education reforms. Many students who exhibit these risk indicators are not given the assistance they need. They are ritualistically processed through a series of routine courses—watered-down academics like "general math" or watered-down shop courses that teach them to use outmoded equipment. More appropriate educational alternatives exist. These include:

   - Alternative schools which usually have small classes where students can be dealt with on an individual basis and simultaneously feel that they are part of a small community;

   - Alternative educational programs, such as those that integrate remedial reading, writing and mathematics instruction into all subjects, and;

   - Work/study options, in which the curriculum is closely related to those skills that students need on the job.

   - States must also provide positive incentives or standards according to which most schools develop more effective and appropriate education for at-risk students at the same time that new laws are increasing academic requirements and standards.

3) Year-round programming to prevent summer learning loss, a major source of educational retardation for at-risk youth. A number of studies have shown that disadvantaged youth typically suffer a sizable learning loss over the summer months. For youth already in danger of failing, the traditional methods of teaching in most summer school programs may be insufficient. Developing cooperation between school systems and summer employment programs to provide summer remediation to disadvantaged youth is fairly simple.

4) Strengthened capacity to provide basic academic skills to out-of-school youth. Adequate basic skills are a prerequisite for most entry-level job and training programs. It is critical that employment and training programs build in the educational services that participants need for entry into the program.

5) Development of an institutional capacity to provide comprehensive services to out-of-school youth. In most communities, efforts to provide coordinated services are hampered by the lack of a focal point for organizing such services.

6) Establishment of an effective state-level coordination mechanism. This is easier said than done. Attempts to develop such a mechanism frequently fail. Still, it is critical that a state-level body, composed of agency and legislative representatives as well as representatives from other concerned institutions, be established to oversee and implement the systematic management of existing resources. Requiring financial contributions from each agency to support local coordinated efforts is an excellent way to establish the seriousness of a practical effort at an early stage.

7) Creating incentives and leveraging techniques. States do not usually have full control of resources used for local services and programming for youth.

8) Encouragement of local creativity within purposeful guidelines is critical. There is a debate among experts concerning the merits of providing funds for localities to address certain problems in whatever way they feel will be prudent as opposed to providing funds with clear direction on how localities must spend them. The most effective approach appears to lie somewhere between these two positions. The exact solution is dependent on the nature of the problem being addressed. Thus, the degree of direction given by the state to localities should depend on the certainty and specificity of purpose.

Obstacles

Optimism engendered by the positive experience noted in this report must be tempered by an appreciation of the limitations and the obstacles states face in developing programs for at-risk youth. Neither at-risk youth nor their families represent a coherent political force. Thus, there are few short-term political rewards for serving them. It took the authors of this paper a considerable time to find states in which both the governor and the chief state school officer were willing to make the very modest commitment of time and money required to be considered a demonstration site. Despite signs of increased concern, the emergence of a political consensus on the importance of the issue remains uncertain.

While small initiatives offer a practical first step, they are also subject to the "program trap." No state has completely overcome structural barriers, interagency rivalries, or traditions of state/local antagonism. No state has been able to conduct a thorough, incisive, data-based analysis of youth. This is a result not only of fragmented information systems and short time frames but also of the reluctance of agencies to share information on problems and resources.

There is also local hostility to state interventions, which can be traced to causes that vary from custom to specific political conflicts. Such hostility limits the number of localities that respond with enthusiasm to state incentives. As the stakes increase, these difficulties become more serious.

Finally, coordination itself has a hidden cost. The pressures of crisis management that develop from coordinated programs require investment of time and planning efforts above and beyond the current duties of most staff.

Barriers to effective youth services are not likely to disappear. Any state youth initiative will be forced to come to grips with them. However, experience to date suggests that the barriers are not insurmountable. The key is to focus the attention of all parties' on the ultimate goal, using each experience as a building block for the next step. Although the initiatives begun by the states are promising and indicate directions for future state action, they are also very modest in scale. Strong and sustained leadership by governors, chief state school officers, legislators and others will be required to mount efforts whose scale and sophistication are adequate to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

The Work Ahead

For the foreseeable future, state governments will hold the key to improving systems and services for at-risk youth. Other agencies will continue to play a role. Some local governments have undertaken effective initiatives on their own and will no doubt continue to do so. Some federal agencies have begun to promote coordinated services for youth through demonstration projects, competitive grants or regulations governing use of categorical funds, a trend that is also likely to continue. State agencies either directly control a broad spectrum of resources potentially applicable to youth at-risk, or they can exert influence on the agencies that do. They are the fulcrum for youth programming.

By adhering to a few key principles and techniques, it is possible for states to take leadership and show effectiveness over a relatively brief period of time without waiting for new funds or vast overhauls of existing systems. These principles and techniques play major roles in the relatively modest state initiatives we see today. It should be clear that the promising starts we have seen in a number of states are just that, "starts." For states to achieve their full potential in serving at-risk youth both the scale and sophistication of efforts must be increased exponentially.

For such advancement to occur, governors, chief state school officers, other members of the executive branch, and concerned legislators must provide strong and sustained leadership. Leadership is needed to develop appropriate responses to the reprogramming of existing resources or the addition of new ones. This will entail not simply rethinking the use of a few million dollars in discretionary funds, but considering use of the billions of dollars that currently fund programs that are entirely or partly targeted towards at-risk youth. Leadership must also have the staying power and commitment necessary to address the needs for better basic data and data reporting, better needs assessment, and better assessment of the use of funds; develop a thorough inventory of resources available in each state to serve at-risk youth; and design and implement rules and procedures that can effectively redirect resources. Leadership must focus sustained attention on how well basic institutions serve at-risk youth; it will take time to build the systems, habits, and management strategies needed to allow cooperative planning and programming at both the state and local levels. In summary, the challenges are formidable, but the potential benefits are vast. The cost of inaction may be even greater.

What Are We Doing in Wisconsin?

The state of Wisconsin has moved aggressively forward with educational reform, welfare reform and employment and training programs. Since Wisconsin's 1985 benchmark children at-risk legislation, schools and social service agencies have forged ahead to design and implement programs which ensure school attendance and success for such children and their families.

The state of Wisconsin also recognizes that coordination and cooperation among school and community agencies at the local and state level are critical components for working successfully with at-risk youth and their families. A number of programs are already in place which encourage, and in many cases mandate, that those who work with at-risk children coordinate their efforts in order to better meet the complex needs of these children. Examples of our efforts follow.

1. *Wisconsin Standards for School Effectiveness*. Wisconsin's blueprint for excellence in education is directed at a state constitutional requirement that the legislature must create school districts as nearly uniform as possible. The 20 standards focus on children, assuring youth in Wisconsin an opportunity for quality education. By establishing minimum expectations for every district's total education program, the standards signal the clear intent of the state that opportunities will be provided to all children regardless of where they reside. Standards which directly impact on children at-risk programming include:

   Standard (c): Remedial Reading. Requires school districts to provide a program to identify and help underachieving students in kindergarten through grade three.

   Standard (e): Guidance and Counseling Services. Requires school districts to provide guidance and counseling services that are consistent and provide systematic attention to the personal, social, learning and career/vocational needs of students.

   Standard (m): Education for Employment. Requires all school districts to provide all students, throughout their school career, access to classes and programs designed to prepare them for employment.

Standard (n): Children At-Risk. This standard is directed at reducing the number of children who are at risk of failure in school and life. Although it is not solely the school's responsibility to alleviate social conditions that put children at-risk, school programs and staff efforts are necessary to help children cope with health and social stresses that impair their ability to learn, progress through school, and graduate. Section 118.153 of the Wisconsin Statutes defines children at-risk and requires every school board to annually identify such children in the district and develop a plan for programs to meet their needs. Needs may be met through curriculum modifications and alternative programs, remedial instruction, parental involvement, pupil support services, community support service programs, preparation for work programs, and other proven approaches.

2. *Educational Reforms Impacting on Services to Students At-Risk*

Youth Suicide Prevention – All districts are required to have a suicide prevention curriculum in place to help youth learn how to make sound decisions, identify the signs and causes of suicide, understand the influence of alcohol and other drugs on suicide and identify available community resources.

P-5 Program – The Preschool to Grade 5 Program targets state resources to elementary schools in the Milwaukee, Kenosha, and Beloit school districts that have high concentrations of students from low-income families.

Early Childhood Education – Full funding is provided for full day five-year old kindergarten and partial funding is provided for half day four-year old kindergarten so that disadvantaged students can receive remedial and enrichment services which prepare them for entry into the first grade.

Education About AIDS – In collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services, the DPI has developed programs to inform people about the transmission of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. The two agencies are training school district and community health personnel how to include AIDS instruction in K-12 health education curriculums.

Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse – Numerous state and federal funding resources have helped nearly all of the state's 430 operating school districts establish alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse programs.

Expanded Truancy Laws – The Department of Public Instruction worked with the state legislature to develop legislation which clarifies and re solves the truancy problem. The major truancy legislation created a new crime—contributing to the truancy of a child—and stiffened penalties for parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school. It also required countywide planning to combat truancy and provided for new dispositional alternatives to deal with habitual truancy.

Compulsory Attendance – In 1987, the Compulsory Attendance statute was revised to require school attendance through high school graduation or to age 18. In so doing, the option to waive 16- and 17year olds from compulsory attendance was eliminated.

Child Sexual Abuse – Wisconsin is one of the few states whose education agency has produced guidelines for schools regarding prevention and intervention related to child sexual abuse and child abuse in general. The department has also helped develop prevention projects, upgrade child-abuse reporting statutes, develop training for child-protective service personnel, and establish regional coalitions of schools and community agencies to address problems in training and reporting.

School Age Parent Program – Any school board, CESA or consortium of districts may establish a program for school-age parents and be eligible to receive state aid of 63 percent for the costs of teacher salaries, instructional aide, special transportation and other approved expenses. The programs are designed to provide services and instruction to meet the needs of these parents through graduation or to age 21.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth – The department has received a federal grant which has enabled Wisconsin to develop and implement a state plan designed to overcome barriers that deny homeless pupils access to a free and appropriate education in the public schools.

3. *Interagency Work Groups in State Government.* The following is an example of a work group that was convened to develop public policy and statewide initiatives to better serve the needs of children at-risk.

   The group was composed of staff from the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Health and Social Services, county social services staff and local school administrators. The work group developed budget and programmatic recommendations for a joint initiative to be included in the state's 1989-91 biennial budget related to children and families at-risk. The initiative is titled, "Success in School: Support for Children and Families." The proposed program is intended to address the needs of children at-risk and their families. The proposal targets educational, health, and human services towards children with family problems that interfere with their attendance at and achievement in school and for whom educational services alone are insufficient and ineffective. The proposal would ensure more efficient and effective use of resources through collaboration among schools, human services agencies, health agencies, and other community resources in areas of the state with concentrated populations of children at-risk.

The state's future goals include strengthening the children at-risk policy to provide a preschool through age 20 safety net which guarantees a viable education for all students in order to insure success in life and work. We continue to search for effective ways to help our children succeed as students and citizens of Wisconsin.

In summary, Wisconsin is aware of the multitude of barriers facing at-risk children in our schools and communities. At the state level, there has been and will continue to be a concerted effort to coordinate state resources so that we may more effectively impact on the lives of our children.

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About the Organization

Public/Private Ventures is a national, not-for-profit corporation that seeks effective approaches to job training and education for disadvantaged youth.